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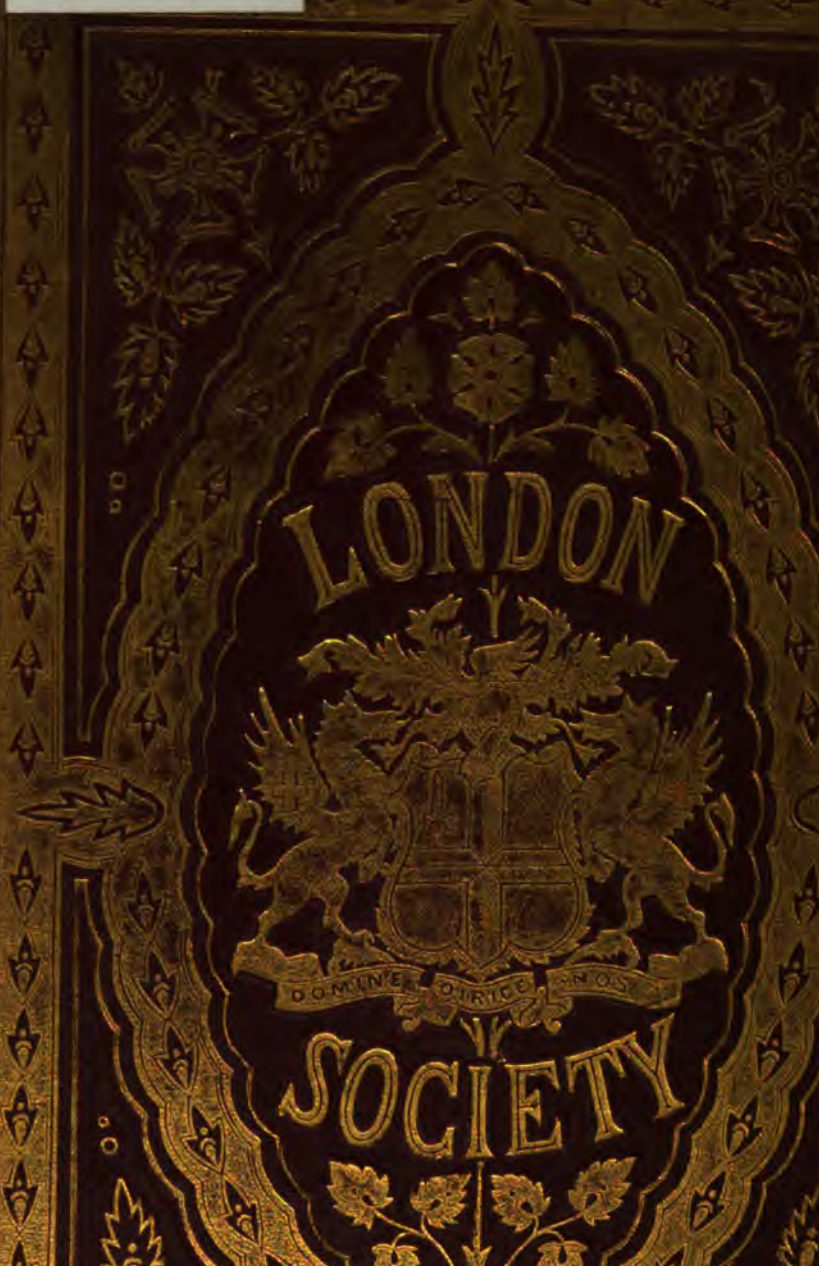
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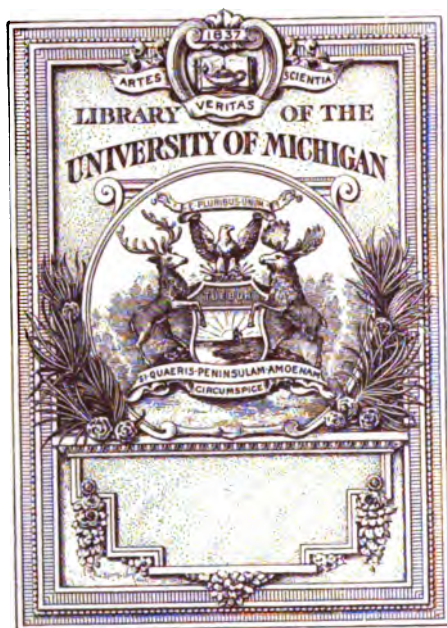
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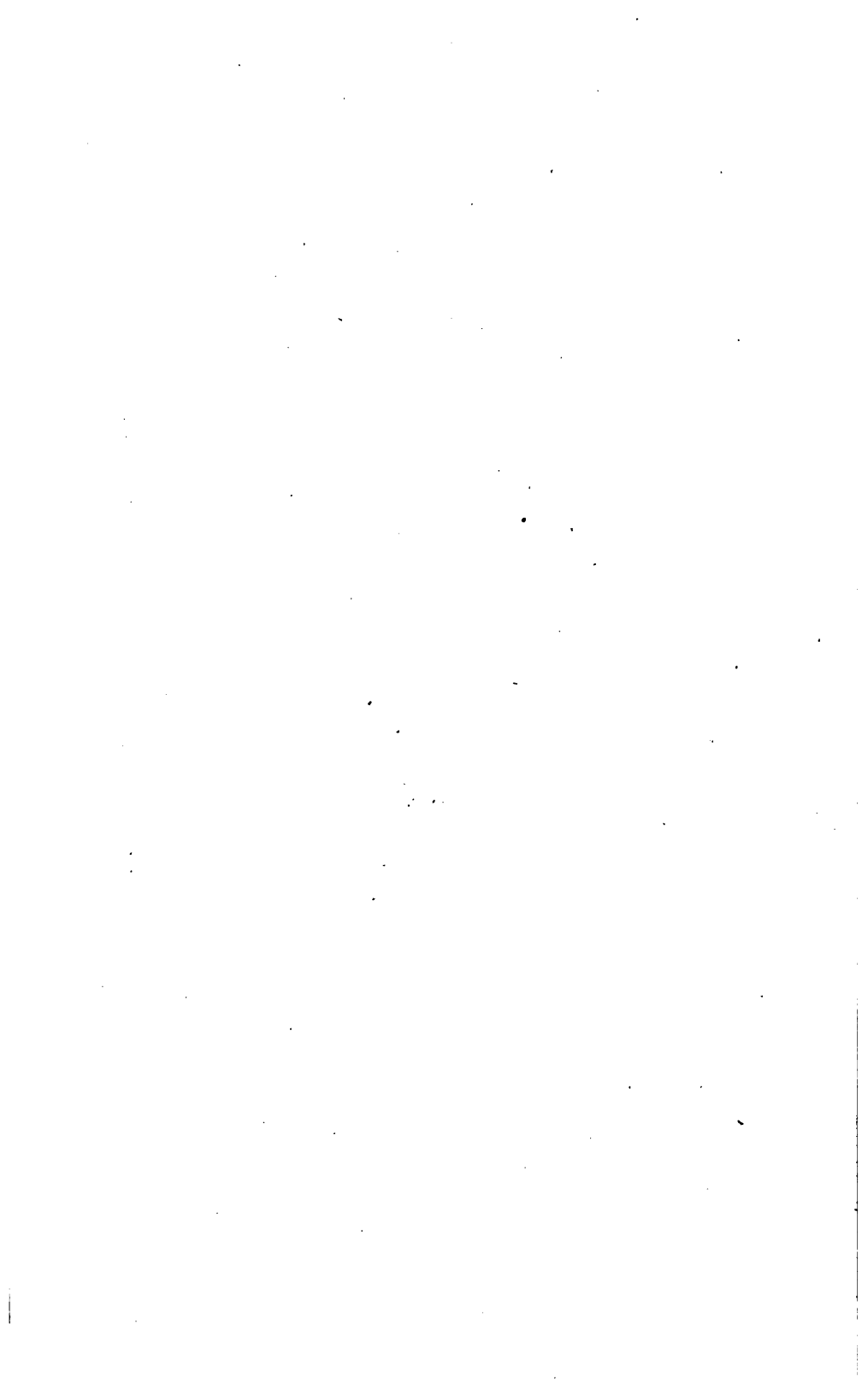
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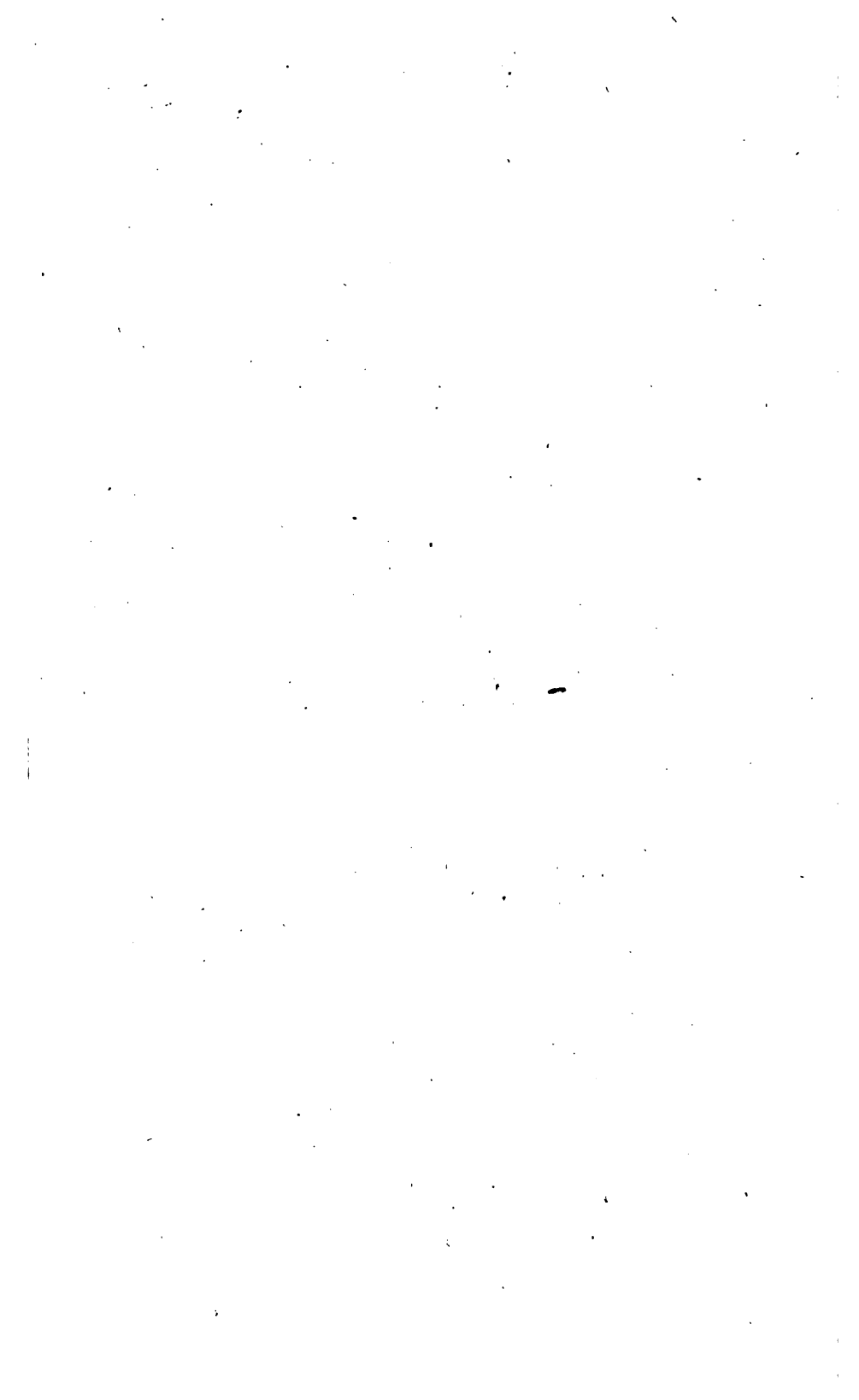


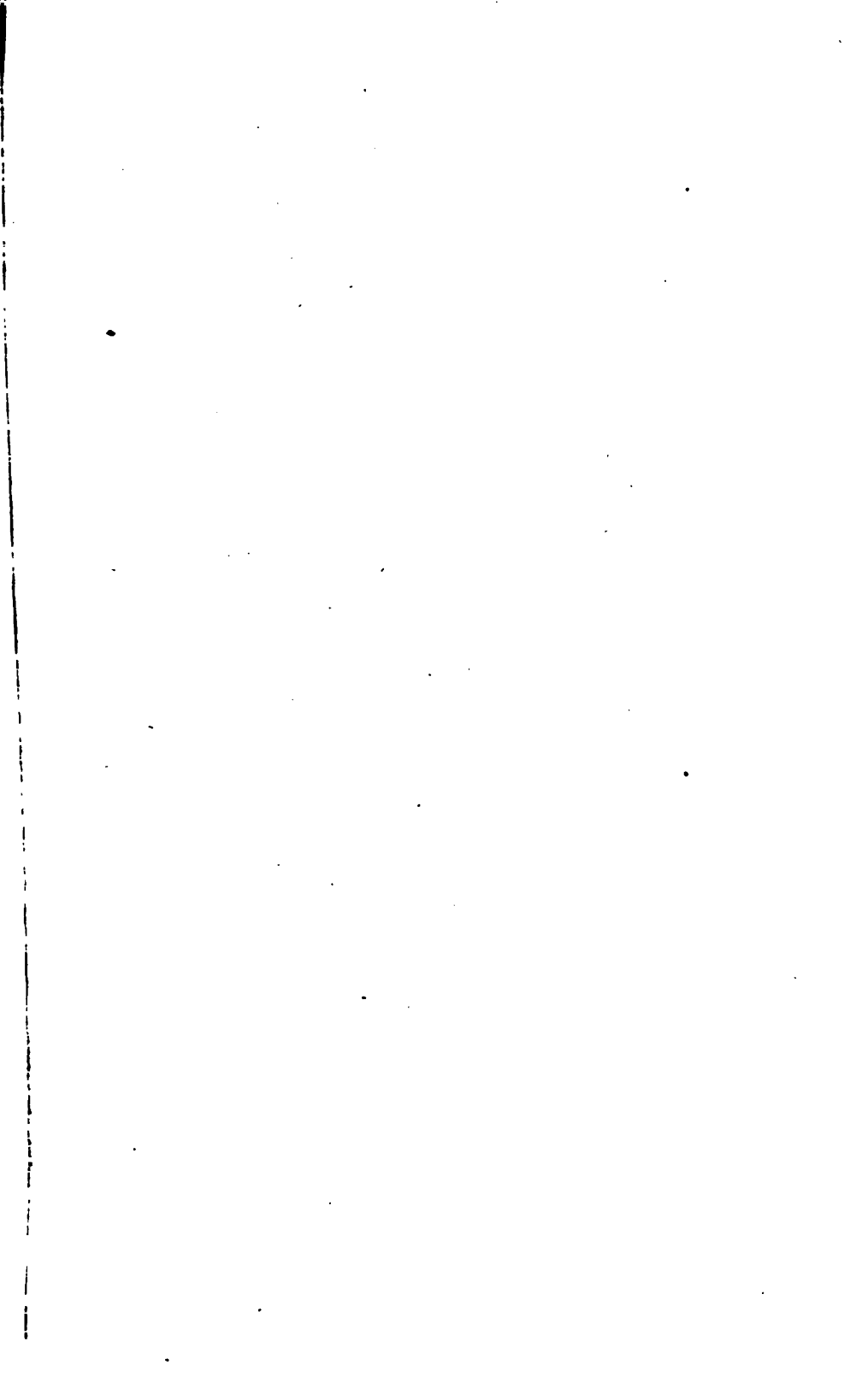


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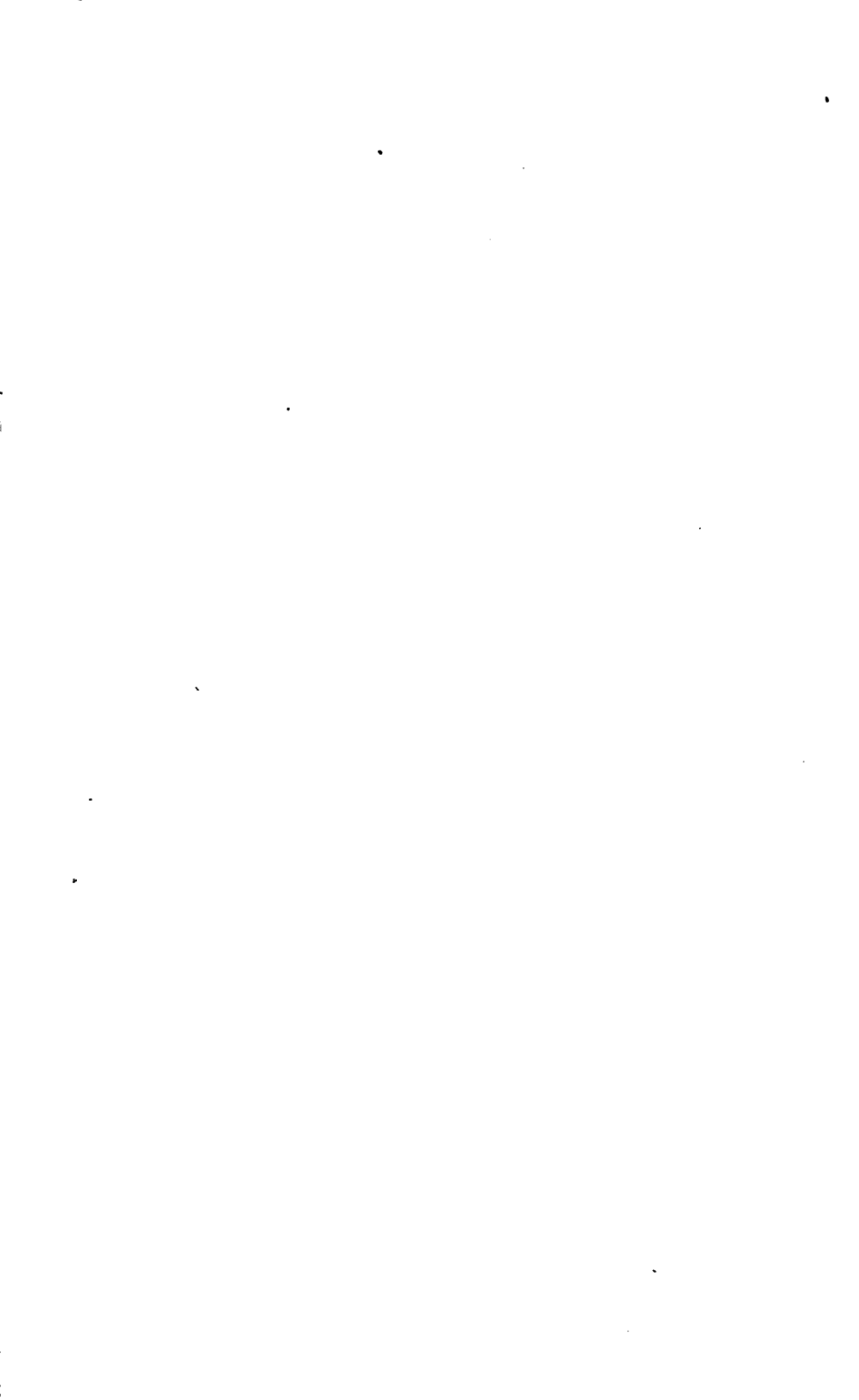


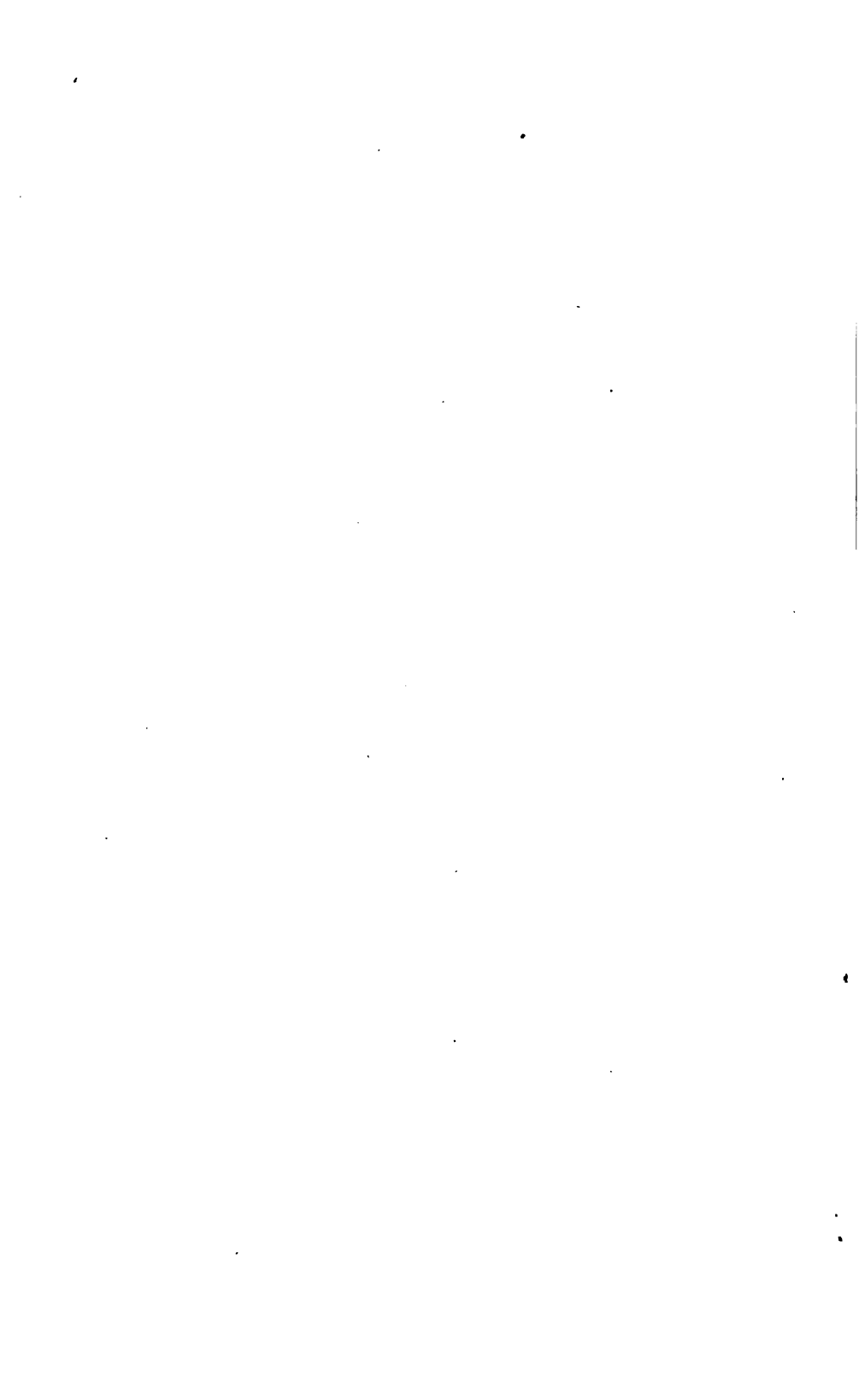




Drawn by R. Wagner.]

'TWO, COMPANY ; THREE, NONE.'





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LONDON SOCIETY.

An Illustrated Magazine

OF

LIGHT AND AMUSING LITERATURE

FOR

THE HOURS OF RELAXATION.

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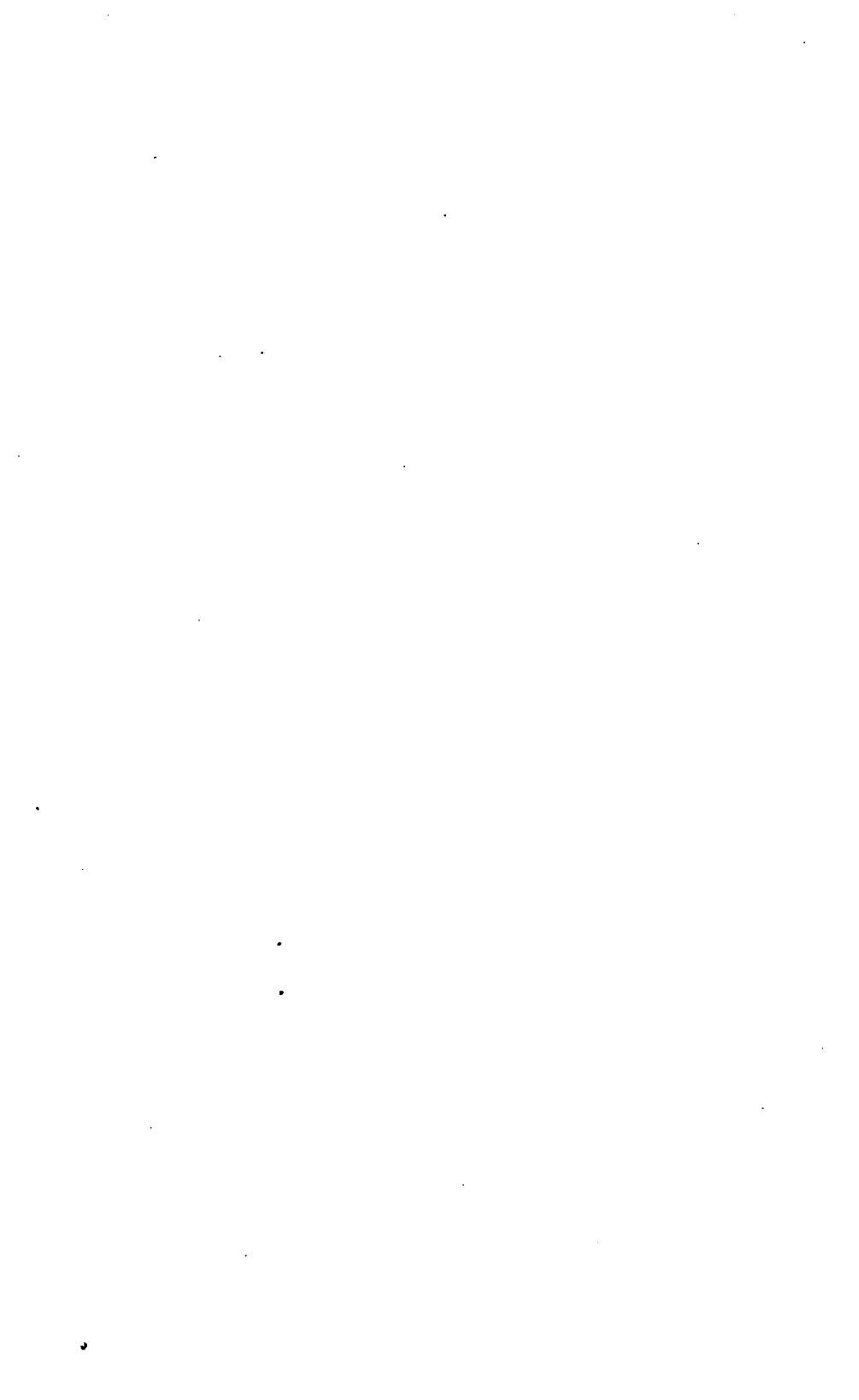
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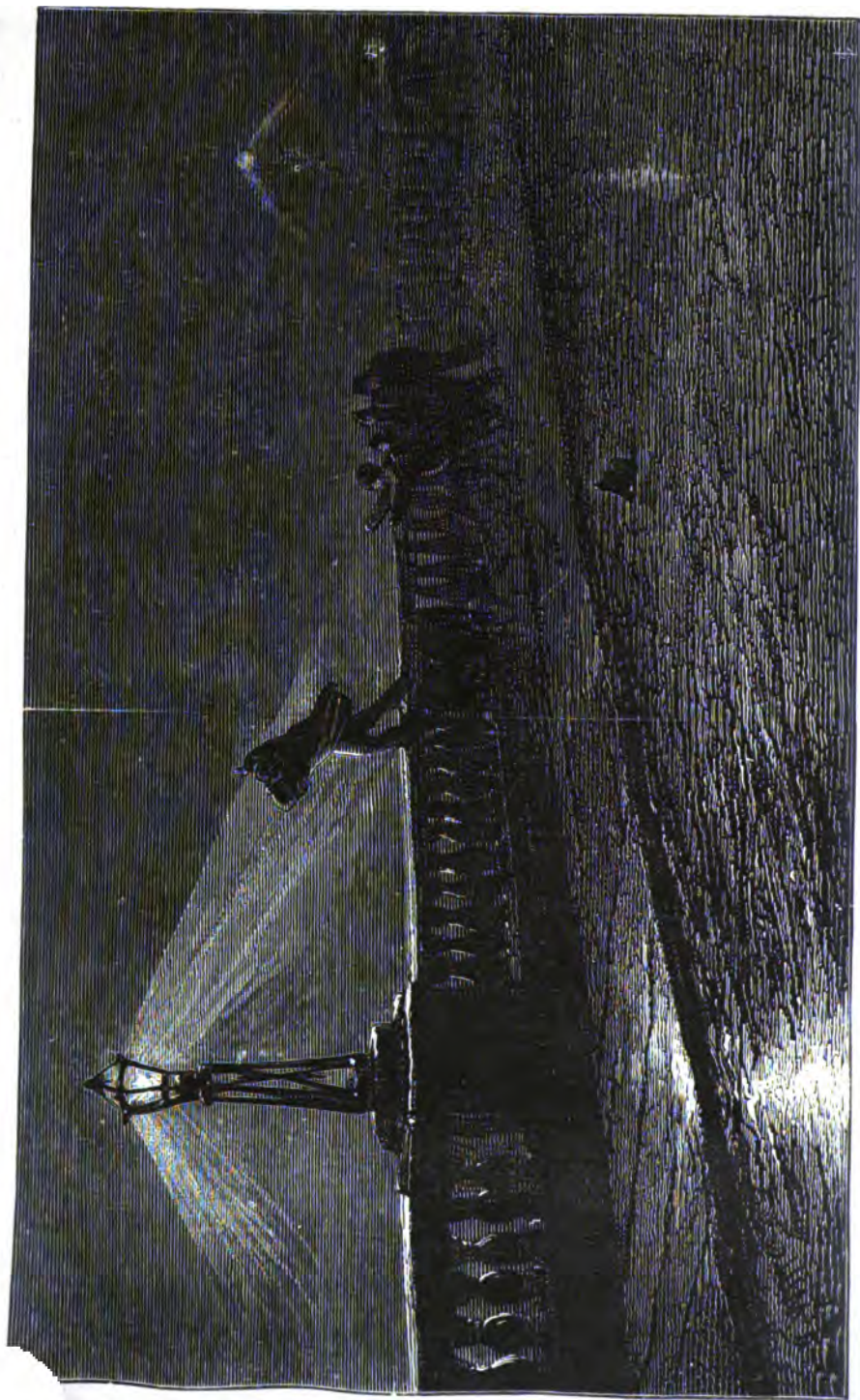
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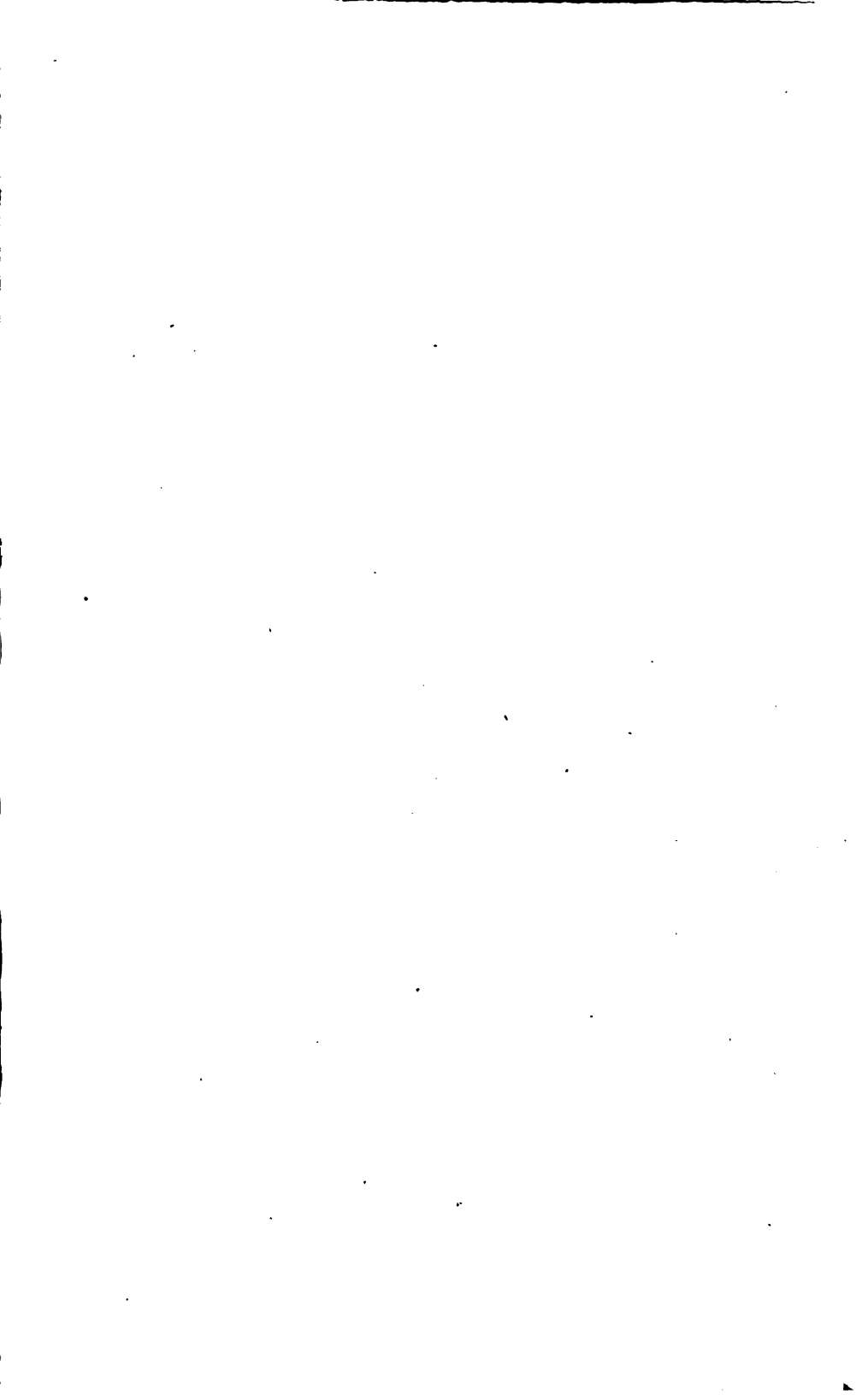






Drawn by J. W. McIntyre.]

FOG.



A Happy New Year



Drawn by R. Caldecott.]

LONDON SOCIETY.

JANUARY, 1875.

ABOVE SUSPICION.

BY MRS. J. H. RIDDELL.

CHAPTER XII.

MR. IRWIN WAXES COMMUNICATIVE.

ABOUT noon on the following day Mr. Irwin was somewhat surprised to see the rector of Fisherton enter his office once again.

'Now, pray, pray do not rise,' began the reverend gentleman, hat in one hand, umbrella under his arm, enforcing his entreaty with a persuasive pastoral grasp of his new friend's nearest shoulder.

'I have not come to disturb you, or to take up the time of a man to whom time is money. I just want to ask one question, and then I will be off.'

He stood on the hearthrug, looking the embodiment of clerical respectability. A novice in the deceptive nature of such appearances might have taken his note of hand as good for a thousand pounds; and even Mr. Irwin, who had seen something of the world and the people in it, found no little difficulty in realising the fact that, but for his interposition, the rectory goods would have been advertised for sale in the morning papers.

As if adversity were a cold bath, and a plunge in its waters refreshing, the Rector had come up out of its depths cheerful, rubicund, smiling. The white-

ness of his shirt was immaculate, the tie of his cravat a marvel of accuracy of design and neatness of execution, the fit of his coat precisely what the fit of the rector of Fisherton's coat should have been, whilst his hat was new undeniably. Mr. Wright had indeed bought it by the way.

Yes, here was the man Mr. Irwin needed—a man it seemed impossible wholly to dislike, and equally impossible wholly to respect—a man whom fate could not buffet out of countenance, and who would do anything he honestly could in a decent, even if doubtful, sort of way, to add to his income—a man who would not ask too many questions if it were necessary for him to hold his peace—who could talk, if talk were required, from his mouth, and keep silence if he understood silence meant profit.

So thought Mr. Irwin; and yet the Rector's first move seemed to indicate some error in his premises or his conclusions.

'I mentioned that little matter to Mrs. Wright last night,' said the reverend gentleman, who had four different ways of designating his better half, according as circumstances required.

'Yes,' answered Mr. Irwin, taking refuge behind that detestable monosyllable, as Mr. Wright considered it.

'And of course we feel we should be only too delighted to meet your views, even if such a course did not promise pecuniary advantage to ourselves; but there is one thing—one question——'

'Yes,' repeated Mr. Irwin.

'Really, now I am here, it seems such a ridiculous inquiry that I think I shall just go home again, leaving it unmade,' said Mr. Wright, who had never in the whole of his varied life believed that one word, and that word 'yes,' could have proved such a barrier to conversation.

'If I were in your place I should not do anything of the kind,' replied Mr. Irwin. 'You came here, as I understand, to ask some question, which now appears to you superfluous. Under any circumstances I should put it.'

'You are very good, I am sure. As you advise perfect candour, I will put it. Is there—was there anything peculiar about the birth of the young lady in whose welfare you are so deeply interested?'

The question was so different from anything Mr. Irwin had anticipated, that he stared at his visitor in blank amazement.

'I am not her mother,' he answered, 'but I have no reason to doubt she came into the world much as other children do, however that may be.'

'That is not what I mean,' said the Rector, thinking, with a cold shudder, that he had perhaps taken a wrong tack, and that Mr. Irwin was aware of it.

'What do you mean, then?'

'Well, I feel an awkwardness in putting the query into plain words. Cannot you help me a little?'

'I confess I cannot, unless you help me to understand what you want to know. Have you got an idea that the girl is queer in any way? Because, if you have, I can answer you. She is as sane as either of us, and a dear, good little creature beside.'

'I give you my word such a notion never crossed my mind,' said Mr. Wright heartily. 'The fact is, I imagined—that is, I did not imagine, but I thought I should like to know whether the young lady's parents were—married.'

'Certainly they were. I was present at the marriage.'

'You have taken a load off my mind,' exclaimed the Rector, holding out his hand, and shaking Mr. Irwin's till that gentleman's fingers tingled. 'I am so thankful, though of course I never really felt any apprehension. I am so glad. My dear wife will be so relieved. We shall be delighted to try to fill the place of parents to your orphan niece.'

Mr. Irwin took his hand, which the Rector had at length released, into his own custody, and folding its fellow over it, said, 'As a matter of curiosity, I wish you would tell me how my niece's legitimacy can prove any relief to Mrs. Wright.'

'With the greatest pleasure,' answered the Rector. 'Like myself, my wife is an Irishwoman—that is, I would say——'

'Never mind the bull, Mr. Wright. You will only correct it, I foresee, by saying an Irishman. Mrs. Wright being, like you, an Irishwoman, what follows?'

'Well, you know what Irishwomen are.'

'I do in the States. I cannot compliment you on your compatriots there.'

'I do not know anything about

them in the States,' said Mr. Wright a little impatiently.

'What you wish to say, I suppose,' suggested Mr. Irwin, 'is that Irishwomen are usually supposed to have a higher standard of morals, and are more capable of acting up to it, than the women of other countries.'

'That is it,' agreed the Rector; 'only you should not have interpolated "supposed" into your sentence. They have, sir; they are.'

'I am quite willing to take your word on both points, Mr. Wright,' said Mr. Irwin. 'Except as "helps," I have no acquaintance with their virtues or vices. Still I ask what then?'

'Why, only this. My poor dear has passed through sufficient trouble and experienced sufficient sorrow to make her tolerant and pitiful to any sinner. And I think I may safely say, no outcast from society, no deserted creature, no poor wretch plunged in sin and misery, would appeal to her womanly heart in vain. Nevertheless, she has her crotchets. Her father, though one of the kindest men who ever lived, was full of them; and, further, all ladies—Mrs. Irwin, whom I have not the honour of knowing, of course excepted—have their whims and fancies.'

'You need not except Mrs. Irwin. She has her whims and fancies, which, like a good husband, I respect,' was the reply.

'Dear, dear! I am sorry to hear you say that,' remarked Mr. Wright, with more earnest sympathy than Selina might altogether have approved. 'Well, then, talking to a family man—a man blessed, no doubt, with a wife in every respect as admirable as mine, but still aware, from experience, of the peculiarities of the better sex—I may say Mrs. Wright has very strong opinions on the

subject we have been discussing. And though I do not mean to say she would decline the responsibility of taking charge of a—hem!—child born out of wedlock, still she would accept the trust in fear and trembling, lest the sin of the mother might be entailed on the child.'

'Do I understand you to say that Mrs. Wright believes, if a woman goes wrong, her child, differently placed, differently educated, differently guarded, kept from temptation, is likely, out of sheer depravity, to go wrong too?'

'You put the matter strongly,' suggested the Rector.

'Do I put it too strongly?' asked Mr. Irwin.

'I do not know that you do,' was the reply. 'I told you my wife had her prejudices.'

'Well, it is a very strange notion,' said Mr. Irwin thoughtfully.

'I do not believe,' began the Rector, clearing his throat, 'that the idea of mental as well as bodily maladies being hereditary is so singular a one as you seem to imagine. You are a good churchman, as I know, and therefore I need scarcely do more than remind you—'

'Does Mrs. Wright think other sins, besides that of bringing an unfortunate infant into a world which has no place and no name ready for it, are transmitted from parents to children?' asked Mr. Irwin, cutting ruthlessly across the Rector's meditated discourse. 'Take murder, for instance. There was a man hung at Newgate last Monday. Suppose him to have left a child, do you imagine it likely that child will commit murder also?'

'I trust not, but I should consider the probability of his taking away life greater than in the case

of one of my own boys for instance.'

'Given, that one of your boys and he were so situated as to start with the same advantages or disadvantages—'

'They could not start the same, he being his father's son, and my boy being my son.' And Mr. Wright stood virtuously upright, internally thanking God and glorifying himself that his children were not as other children, inasmuch as they called him father, and his wife Selina mother.

'It is a curious speculation,' said Mr. Irwin, at length, lifting his head and looking thoughtfully in the Rector's self-satisfied face. 'I will not say you are wrong, but I hope you are not right, or else it would be a dreary prospect for philanthropists and social reformers.'

'We are all bound to do what lies in our power to make this sinful world better,' remarked Mr. Wright; 'and by the blessing of Providence, philanthropists, and we poor clergymen, and true Christians like yourself, are able to effect some good even amongst the most depraved classes of society; but it would be worse than folly to shut our eyes to the fact that vice is hereditary—or, if you prefer a milder expression, that most weaknesses are constitutional and capable of transmission. As we say in Ireland, "The dirty drop will come out," and it will, too. I could give you fifty instances in which money, and education, and association have been employed to counteract its influence in vain.'

'We have digressed considerably from the subject of my niece,' remarked Mr. Irwin. 'Am I to understand all obstacles are now removed, or is there any other question you wish to put to me?'

'None, not one,' answered the

Rector, inflating his chest and rising a little on his toes to give greater emphasis to the utter confidence he reposed in the respectability of Mr. Irwin, and Mr. Irwin's relations.

'So far, so good,' said that gentleman; 'but now there is an explanation I wish to give to you. It is a necessary explanation, or I should not make it; it is not altogether pleasant, and therefore I must beg that you will regard it as confidential.'

'You may say anything to me,' replied Mr. Wright. 'In the interests of a friend, I can be secret as the grave—silent as the dead—'

'I wish you would sit down,' suggested Mr. Irwin.

'My dear friend, why did you not mention that wish sooner?' replied the Rector, seating himself with alacrity. 'I know how disagreeable it is to talk up to a man. And now tell me your difficulty—but stop. First, am I, or am I not to mention the matter to my wife?'

'I think that from so admirable a wife and discreet a lady you ought to have no secrets,' was the answer.

'Of my own I have none,' said the Rector, which was indeed very true, for Mrs. Wright would never have permitted him to indulge in such a luxury; 'unless it may be when I occasionally attempt a pious fraud and try to make worldly matters look brighter than they really are, so as not to worry the poor soul unnecessarily; but, bless you, she always finds out that I have been deceiving her. A friend's secret, however, I would, if he desired it, keep safe in my own bosom;' and Mr. Wright thereupon tapped his chest, which was certainly capacious enough for the purpose indicated.

'We will not exclude Mrs. Wright in this instance,' said Mr. Irwin. 'What I wish to tell you is that my wife is not aware of my niece's existence.'

'She is his daughter,' thought the Rector, feeling now quite confident upon that point. 'Probably the offspring of some youthful, wretched *mésalliance*.'

'You don't mean it,' he remarked aloud.

'I do mean it,' persisted the other. 'I have never mentioned her name to my wife, and if I can avoid doing so, I never shall name it. Some years ago—it does not matter how many—I found myself in the possession of a considerable sum of money, part of which I held in trust for other people, and a portion of which I might have fairly appropriated to my own use. But I had reason for supposing—indeed, for knowing—the money had been acquired by questionable means; and I resolved to employ none of it beyond what might be absolutely needful for the necessities of my position, for my personal pleasure or advancement in life.'

'A resolution which did you honour,' observed the Rector; and a glow of conscious rectitude flushed his face as he mentally considered how much he should like to be placed in a position where he could not only make such a resolve, but keep it.

'In furtherance of this design,' continued Mr. Irwin, 'I went to America, where I obtained employment in the house of Irwin and Son, die-sinkers. Mr. Irwin was an Englishman, originally engaged in business with his brother in the very premises where I am now speaking to you.'

'I follow your words,' said Mr. Wright, as the speaker paused. 'I shall understand their meaning presently.'

'In the particular class of work to which he had devoted his life I was not inexperienced—indeed, I may say, without vanity, there are few men who know more of its mysteries than I; and Mr. Irwin, whose heart was in his trade, took a fancy to me, and eventually placed me in a lucrative and responsible position. All this time, however, I was his clerk—his servant—what you will that signifies dependence and inequality of rank, and I did not encroach on his kindness—I did not intrude myself on his notice because he was good enough to think me of service in his business. After I had been with him for some time, a terrible affliction befell him. His son—his only son—died. He had loved that son well as his child; but I do think he loved him more as the future representative of Irwin and Son. He moped about, and hugged his grief, and neglected his business, and during that period I managed everything for him—managed so well, that his connection, instead of falling off, extended—the reputation of his house grew. He had one other child, a daughter. Now you begin to comprehend my story. I should not, situated as I was, have dreamed of aspiring to her hand; but she honoured me with her regard, her father more than approved of the arrangement, and by marriage I stepped into the name and the place of the dead son.

'Absent from England, and likely to remain absent for ever, I made no mention to father or daughter of the few relations I possessed. Within a couple of years of my marriage, however, the brother with whom my Mr. Irwin had originally been in partnership here died childless, and his fortune and his business passed to the man with whom he had quarrelled forty years previously. Immediately

upon this event he was seized with that *maladie du pays* which, sooner or later, afflicts every true-born Briton, and nothing would content him but to dispose of the American business, and return to London and Eastcheap. How earnestly I entreated that he would let me have the American business, I could not tell you; but he refused. His whim was to make his name world-known in connection with this establishment, and it was not for me, who owe everything almost I possess to his generosity, to cross such a fancy.'

'Certainly not,' agreed Mr. Wright promptly, remembering, no doubt, that if old Mr. Irwin's whim had not chanced to bring him across the Atlantic, the Rectory would most probably have been stripped of some of its choicest treasures. 'The gentleman I had the pleasure of seeing yesterday, then, no doubt is your respected father-in-law?'

'Yes; eccentric, but admirable—a just man, a staunch friend, an affectionate father. Happy in his business, in the home he makes in London with us, and happy, above all, in his grandchildren—in one especially, a boy, who is hereafter to compass wonders in the way of commercial achievement. A cheerful interior, you will think. Yet there is a slight shadow lying over it. My wife's health is wretched. I do not know what is the matter with her, neither do the doctors, neither does she herself. If she had been a poor woman, and compelled to exert herself, it is possible her health might have been better. As matters stand, she has sunk into a state of physical helplessness and mental irritability, which compels us to avoid subjecting her to the slightest annoyance. Were I differently situated—were I a free man, even if a much less wealthy—were my wife

strong, and able to share any trouble with me, our house, of course, would be the most fitting home for my niece to come to.'

'I understand your position—I recognise the difficulty. You *could not* take her to your own home,' remarked Mr. Wright, thinking of his wife Selina, and the hundred a year she had already in the dead of night verbally appropriated to many domestic needs.

'You do not understand all my difficulty yet,' continued Mr. Irwin. 'I never could have mentioned the existence of this girl, to whom I am, in fact, sole guardian, without entering into a number of details which, for various reasons, are to me fraught with very great pain; and it would be utterly impossible for me to open the subject now without introducing an apple of discord into my home.'

'Utterly,' agreed Mr. Wright. Sorry indeed would he have been to take such an apple and present it for Selina's acceptance.

'Therefore I judged it better to look out for some family with whom I could place my little niece,' finished Mr. Irwin. 'I advertised my requirements, and have had many interviews with various persons in consequence; but all proved more or less unsatisfactory, and I had almost made up my mind to allow her to remain at school for another year, when you came to Riversdale.'

'A most providential visit for me,' murmured the Rector, with a lively memory of the fifty pounds, and a still livelier faith in other fifties he trusted were yet to follow.

'I trust it may prove providential for my niece,' said Mr. Irwin; 'for she is a very lonely little woman.'

'Poor dear!' ejaculated Mr. Wright. 'It shall not be our fault, Mr. Irwin, if she is not

happy in our humble home—that I promise you.’

‘Thank you,’ said Mr. Irwin. ‘I am sure you will fulfil your promise,’ and the pair shook hands once more.

‘By-the-by,’ remarked the Rector, returning after he reached the first landing, and putting his head inside the door again, ‘you have not yet told me the young lady’s name.’

‘Miles,’ was the reply.

‘Not her Christian name, surely!’ exclaimed Mr. Wright, to whom the cognomen was familiar enough in his own dear land.

‘That is Bella.’

‘Bella Miles,’ repeated the Rector. ‘I shall not forget. Much obliged. Good morning.’

CHAPTER XIII.

MR. WRIGHT WONDERS WHAT SELINA WILL SAY.

It seemed as if, after all, Miss Bella Miles, kept so studiously from disturbing the domestic peace—if peace such an armed neutrality could be called—of Mr. and Mrs. Irwin, was to prove, even before she appeared at Fisherton, an apple of discord between the Rector and his wife.

There were many things Mrs. Wright wanted to do on the strength of her coming, which Mr. Wright’s knowledge of Mr. Irwin’s character and position taught him could not be done; and when he ventured to suggest difficulties, Selina waxed fractious.

‘Of course we must refurnish a bedroom for her,’ said Mrs. Wright. ‘She can sleep in it when no one is staying here; and it will do for best bedchamber when Colonel Leschelles, or any one else very particular, comes for a few days. And we had better have good articles when we are buying—they

always prove the cheapest in the long run.’

‘You cannot get them without ready money,’ ventured Mr. Wright; ‘and where that is to come from perhaps you know. I confess I do not.’

‘It shall come from Mr. Irwin,’ she replied, standing well to her guns.

‘I don’t think it will,’ said the Rector; ‘at any rate, I should not select the things till you have his cheque in your purse to pay for them. But of course you know best.’

Which remark putting the lady on her mettle, she at once went to her desk, and in an extremely clear, pretty, and feminine hand wrote a clever little note to Mr. Irwin, assuring him of the pleasure she should feel in welcoming his niece to the Rectory, and adding a hope that in time the young girl ‘may become as much attached to me as I am sure I shall be to her.’ After this statement, that had no insincerity about it, since Mrs. Wright’s power of attaching herself to unlikely objects was indeed as boundless, and oftentimes as foolish, as her charity, the Rector’s wife went on to say: ‘So as to be certain to have everything ready for her reception by the time you mentioned to Mr. Wright, I am just ordering furniture for her room—ours being too heavy and old-fashioned, not to say shabby—to please a young lady whose tastes have been formed abroad. I hope to have all bright and pretty to greet her on her arrival here. Again assuring you that nothing that love and care can do to promote her happiness shall be wanting on my part,

‘Believe me

‘Yours very sincerely,

‘SELINA WRIGHT.’

‘Good heavens! they will refurnish the Rectory on the strength

of that hundred a year,' was Mr. Irwin's first thought; while once again the reality of the unwelcome visitor whose presence had driven Mr. Wright to Riversdale seemed an utter impossibility. 'Could the Rector and his wife be sane?' he wondered. 'Was it credible that, within ten days of having his goods rescued from the sheriff, Mr. and Mrs. Wright were actually talking of purchasing more goods, which in their turn would, no doubt, if this was the way the family at Fisherton meant to live on bread and water, be watched and guarded, when the next instalment of the old debt became overdue, by another emissary from Mr. Gath Reuben, sheriff's officer?'

'Instead of benefiting, I shall be ruining them,' considered Mr. Irwin. 'What ought I to do in the matter?' and he was perplexing himself on this point, when it suddenly crossed his mind that the Wrights were sane enough; that Mrs. Wright had apprised him of her hospitable intentions, with a view of getting the money to pay for them; and that the sooner he made her understand he had no intention of doing anything of the sort, the better it would prove for all parties interested.

Having so decided, he took pen in hand, and, in writing which exactly resembled copperplate, replied to Mrs. Wright's note as follows:—

'512 Eastcheap, London.
29th July, 18—.

'MY DEAR MADAM,

'I hasten to express my thanks for your very kind note, just received. Bella will, I trust, do her utmost to merit your good opinion, and to deserve the affection you are so generous as to offer. But pray do not make any alteration in the arrangements of your house on her account. Be-

lieve me, she will be more than satisfied with the present appointments of any room it may be most convenient for you to assign her. A girl who has been for years the inmate of a French school can have had no opportunity of acquiring a taste for luxuries; and, situated as she is, it would be most undesirable for her ever to do so. With assurances of my respect, and gratitude for all your kind intentions with regard to my niece's comfort and happiness,

'I have the honour to remain

'Yours faithfully,

'W. C. IRWIN.'

At the period of the world's history of which I write, the morning's post at Fisherton came heralded by the sound of a bugle. On the especial morning when Mr. Irwin's missive arrived at the Rectory—breakfast happening to be rather later than usual—Mrs. Wright was dispensing weak tea to the family generally, when the letters were brought in.

Copperplate penmanship being apt, as all the world knows, to occupy a considerable amount of space, Mr. Irwin's epistle felt bulky enough to have contained half a dozen cheques, for which reason Mrs. Wright laid it down beside her cup, with a satisfied little pat, and looked across at her husband with a look which said, 'The grey mare has again proved the better horse.'

Before he had finished his breakfast, Mr. Wright was called away to speak to one of his churchwardens; and by the time that individual had said his say and departed, the children were fed and out in the garden.

Cheerfully the Rector stepped back into the parlour, exclaiming, as he entered:

'Well, my dear, how much has our good friend sent you?'

'Read for yourself,' said Mrs. Wright, handing him the note, with an air of resignation. 'You need not talk to me about the man being a gentleman—and writing such a hand, too, like a clerk's!'

'I can tell you I thought I had never seen a nicer hand than his when he signed that cheque,' observed her husband.

'Oh! that is all past and done with,' retorted Mrs. Wright, whose gratitude for past favours was even more evanescent than that of the Reverend Dion. 'It is quite clear to me we have a Jew to deal with—yes, a Jew Christian—and we shall not be at all the better for Miss or her hundred a year—having to keep an extra servant, too.'

Now, this was one of the points over which she and her husband had argued not a little, and, consequently, the reverend gentleman at once replied that he could see no reason, or rhyme either, in keeping another servant.

'We have a pair already,' he remarked, not without reason on his side, 'and between them they get through less work than when we had only one. Given that we take on a third, we shall have to keep them, and do all the work ourselves.'

'I wish you had to do my work for a day—only one,' said Mrs. Wright—'and you would not talk so glibly about three servants being unnecessary.'

Having delivered herself of which sentiment, Mrs. Wright took her parasol, strolled out into the garden, found a comfortable seat, and was soon absorbed in a new novel. Never, in their poorest days, had the Rector's wife failed to pay her subscription to the library.

'It was essential to their position to keep *au courant* with what was going on in the literary

world.' And to do Mrs. Wright justice, she read a greater number and variety of books than any reviewer.

Curiously enough, all the things Mrs. Wright considered it incumbent upon her to perform, in order to maintain that position necessary to their well-being and success in life, were those for which she had a natural taste. Ill-conditioned people said she never believed in a duty unless it chanced to be a pleasure likewise, to which the lady herself, on one occasion, retorted, that it was only right to feel duty a pleasure.

'I am sure I try to do so,' finished the Rector's wife; and on this principle she found that duty demanded a third servant in addition to the two, whose wages, though paid in scrambling, irregular sort of fashion, they were scarcely able to manage.

'She must assist with the needlework, and get up your shirts, dear,' explained Mrs. Wright, when demonstrating that a third servant would prove a saving instead of an expense. 'We must not employ a laundress then at all, even for your surplises.'

The meekest of men domestically, Mr. Wright nevertheless rebelled at this. 'Help with the needlework she may,' he said, 'but get up my linen she never shall. I do not object to a shabby coat occasionally; but wear shirts looking as if they were mangled, and cravats like wisps, I will not; remember that, Selina.'

Whereupon Selina observed that he 'always thwarted her in any scheme she proposed for reducing the domestic expenditure.

'I am not sure,' thought Mr. Wright, as he walked through his parish, head well up, chest protruded, umbrella shouldered—'I am not sure' (he pronounced the

latter word shu-ah) 'whether Providence did not intend the shortness of money, at which I have so often repined, as a blessing. There is an under-current of mercy in many of those misfortunes poor humanity finds it so hard to endure; and it may be that I have purchased domestic happiness at the cheap price of chronic insolvency. It may be, God forgive me the ungracious thought, that Selina, if easy in her mind about pecuniary matters, might develop some sins of another kind fatal to that peace which has hitherto brooded over our home.'

Before the next Sunday Mr. Wright had eliminated a sermon from this idea. Having, for a wonder, received no dunning or threatening letters during the whole week, he was able to give more thought than usual to the subject he proposed treating; and he wrote what he wanted to say carefully, and blotted out freely, the result being a very good discourse, to which Mrs. Wright listened with pleased though critical ears.

'I am sure, Dion,' she said as they walked home together in the summer twilight—it was at evening service the Rector preached the sermon in question—that no one in that church could have failed to take some good for him or herself out of your words to-night. It was all so true and yet so plain. I have not your facility of expression, Dion, nor, of course, your grasp of mind, but I declare that often, in a vague sort of way, I have thought the evils we consider most unendurable are really blessings in disguise. For instance (I know you will not misunderstand what I say), it has sometimes occurred to me, if we had not been obliged to struggle for a large family and

contend with poverty, you might not have been one-half so amiable as you are; you might have been unreasonable, inclined to be capacious and irritable about trifles. Now, Dion, what are you laughing at? I am not jesting. I really do not think you could bear the sun of prosperity as well as you have done the winds of adversity.'

'I should like to be tried, my dear,' answered the Rector, forgetting to practise the virtue himself had inculcated, and then he laughed again; but he did not dare tell his wife that the same idea about her had given birth to his sermon.

'It is really very funny,' he said to himself, as he put his manuscript away with a goodly company of other documents of the same nature. 'I shall never be able to preach that sermon again with gravity—never!'

For Mr. Wright had brought a certain sense of humour into the world with him; and not all the years spent in borrowing and begging money, to keep wolves away from the domestic hearth, had been able to destroy his appreciation of any circumstance which struck him as ludicrous.

The furniture was not bought, but the new maid was hired; and then arose another little misunderstanding between the Rector and his wife.

Mr. and Mrs. Irwin were going to Paris, and it was Mr. Irwin's wish that his new friend should repair to the same place, at the same time, in order that Miss Miles might be committed to his charge by her uncle, and brought back to Fisherton by the Rector of that 'favourite summer resort'—see local guide-book.

Mr. Irwin, of course, was to hand Mr. Wright a sufficient sum to cover his travelling and hotel

expenses. And Mr. Wright, happy at the prospect of such a holiday as a schoolboy, delightedly closed with the proposal, and returned home, never doubting but that Selina would be delighted also to hear of the pleasure in store for her husband. To his astonishment, Mrs. Wright at once objected to the whole scheme.

'I do not think it would be at all proper, Dion, for you to be wandering about the Continent, alone with a young lady,' she began.

'But, my dear,' he interrupted, 'I have no idea of wandering about the Continent with any young lady. I shall bring her straight home.'

'If it be necessary for any one to go, I am the proper person,' persisted Mrs. Wright.

'Come, Selina, that is good!' cried the Rector. 'If it is not the correct thing for me to travel from Paris to London with a chit no older than one of my own girls, I am quite positive it would be most improper for you to be running over Paris with Mr. Irwin.'

'Don't be immoral, Dion,' entreated his wife.

'My dear, if any immorality has been suggested, most certainly I am not the one to blame. So far as I am concerned, you are welcome to go on this trip, instead of me; but I do not think Mrs. Grundy would be satisfied with such a proceeding, and I am quite certain Mr. Irwin would not.'

'I must beg of you not to mention Mr. Irwin to me,' said Mrs. Wright. 'He is not a gentleman, I am convinced. No gentleman would have so completely ignored me throughout this whole arrangement as he has done. But I am determined to assert my position. I shall go to Paris to fetch that girl.'

'If that is your resolve,' remarked Mr. Wright, 'we shall have to travel together, for, most decidedly, I mean to fetch that girl.'

Which was a very strong position for the Rector, who usually deferred to his wife, to take up.

'Very well; let us arrange to do so,' she said, after a minute's pause. 'I dare say we can manage to get the money somehow.'

Cash was short enough at the Rectory just then. But the state of the funds did not stop Mrs. Wright's contemplated journey. She packed her trunk, she made some shiftless arrangements for the well-being of her children, and then she caught a severe cold; so severe that the doctor forbade her leaving her room, and Mr. Wright consequently set out for Paris alone, enjoyed himself there for four days thoroughly, and on the fifth was introduced by Mr. Irwin to his niece.

'I tell Bella she has grown quite a woman since I saw her,' said Mr. Irwin, with a grave smile. 'I must not call her my little niece any longer, must I, Mr. Wright?' But Mr. Wright did not answer. For the moment he was struck literally dumb. He had expected to see an unformed, shy, retiring school miss; and suddenly there was presented to his astonished gaze a most beautiful girl-woman, the most beautiful girl, the Rector decided, he had ever seen; a young girl possessed of a charming voice, and still more charming manners—who seemed to pervade the room with her beauty, and who filled Mr. Wright's heart with a terrible apprehension.

'What will Selina say?' he thought. 'What are we to do in our house with a creature like this?'

(To be continued.)

NOTES ON POPULAR DRAMATISTS.

III.—MR. W. S. GILBERT.

IT is but a very short time since Mr. Gilbert promised to take a position second to no dramatist of the day. His plays were to be seen in all directions; managers clamoured for more; and the first representations of his works were attended by the recognised leaders of literature and art. The public applauded and the newspapers praised, for Mr. Gilbert's wit was facile and fluent, his humour trenchant and keen; and when each new play was announced his admirers hoped that his acute faults would have been overcome, and his weaknesses strengthened. His admirers have been disappointed. The faults seemed to have become chronic; interest in his plays diminished; the critics, disinclined to keep on for ever hiding blame and encouragingly giving praise, spoke freely, and acknowledged that Mr. Gilbert had not done what was expected. He had worked out his special vein—mythological comedy—and, reverting to comedy of everyday life, in which he had never been very strong, he wrote 'Charity,' and began to experience the bitterness of failure. At the time of writing, instead of seeing dramas from his pen occupying half-a-dozen stages, only one slight afterpiece by him is before the London public; nothing else has been played for a long time, and only one new piece is announced.

Whether it is that managers have grown shy of trusting their fate to Mr. Gilbert's hands, or whether he himself is angry at the cool reception his work has lately experienced, we are not able to judge. The only way we have of estimating a dramatist's position

is by noticing the number of plays he produces and the effect they create; and by this standard Mr. Gilbert at the present moment cannot be regarded as a successful writer. It would be an instructive task to examine the causes which have led to his decline in public estimation, and we do not think that they are hard to explain. In the first place, there can be little doubt that 'The Palace of Truth' and 'Pygmalion and Galatea' raised the author into a higher position than his desert merited. The new fancy of using magic power as an influence in plays which must be accepted as legitimate comedies was happy, and undoubtedly Mr. Gilbert worked out his ideas with subtle humour and considerable effect. That the plot of 'The Palace of Truth' was taken from a story of Madame de Genlis we do not hold as detracting from the credit due to the dramatist, who treated it with sufficient novelty to make it his own; and though the notion of mythological comedy is as old as Epicharmus and Aristophanes—indeed the very first comedies ever written had a mythological element—we are perfectly ready to admit that Mr. Gilbert struck out a new path for himself and made his way to admiration. But, even supposing that the vein is not so nearly worked out as the production of 'The Wicked World' would induce one to believe, a dramatist cannot gain the highest reputation while his efforts are confined to one line; and in plays which treat of society as at present constituted, of the everyday life around us, Mr. Gilbert is very unsatisfactory.

A play, to be effective, must win the sympathies of the audience, and it is here that, as a general rule, Mr. Gilbert completely fails. We do not insist that every pair of lovers should be united before the curtain falls; but we do insist that some of the characters should possess generous impulses, should excite our sensibilities by the exhibition of some little tenderness and good feeling. Mr. Gilbert's creations are generally cynical, and sometimes brutal, in their behaviour. They are constantly out of harmony with the spectator; few of them betray that generosity and nobility of spirit which arouses and enchains interest. They are frequently mean, treacherous, and suspicious; and, in short, but for the smartness of dialogue, Mr. Gilbert's plays would have very little to recommend and very much to condemn them. Take for instance 'An Old Score,' the first comedy, we believe, that the author produced, and note the characteristics of the *dramatis personæ*. Colonel Calthorpe is mean and dishonest, and has been criminal. His son Harold is a reckless gambler, and is besides extremely priggish and rude. 'I suppose I am a scoundrel,' he soliloquises. 'Heaven knows I've been told so often enough, and by men—and women—who've had better means of judging than he has!' James Casby, the Bombay merchant, who is engaged to the Colonel's niece, Ethel, acts in a very questionable way about the bills which Calthorpe had forged. Parkle is a scheming and time-serving attorney, cringing or overbearing as may best suit the object he has for the moment in view; Manasseh is a Jew money-lender; and Mrs. Pike a dishonest laundress. The two girls, Ethel Barrington and Mary Walters, are colourless, but perhaps may pass muster, though

Mary carries on a clandestine love affair with Harold. The only other character is Flathers, the footman, who finds the forged bills, and lets his master have them for a hundred pounds. Certainly all is made smooth at the end of the play; but we decline to believe in more than the temporary reformation of Lord Ovington (Colonel Calthorpe) and his son—unless, indeed, they are lucky enough altogether to escape temptation. The sentences with which the comedy opens are not happy. What gentleman would speak thus to a girl he had loved?—Ethel is at the piano, Harold lounging on a sofa:—

'HAR. Ethel, my dear girl, I'd stand a great deal from you that I wouldn't stand from any one else, but there's a limit to one's endurance even of musical torture. I've stood Verdi and Offenbach with the constancy of an early martyr—but Beethoven—oh, hang it, I draw the line long before I get to Beethoven.'

ETHEL. (*leaving the piano*) My music did not bore you once, Harold.

HAR. Of course it didn't. You see, one don't begin by being bored. The word is an expressive one, implying a slow, gradual process, possibly very agreeable in its earlier stages, but degenerating, as it goes on, into an intolerable nuisance.

ETHEL. Gentlemanly! (*comes down and sits R.*)

HAR. Besides, in the remote period you delicately indicate by the word "once," not only was I foolishly in love with you, but (what is more to the point) that tinkling old box of music was an uncommonly decent cottage piano. When I fondly adored you, it was my duty to fondly adore your music also. But now that James Casby holds my commission, you must look to him for an efficient discharge of the duties attached to the office. I can't undertake the drudgery of an adorer, unless I'm permitted to benefit by the emoluments. In a month, James Casby will be your husband. If you want to play to him, take my advice and do so before the month is up.'

A little farther on is a scene between the scoundrels which the author seems to depict with parti-

cular gusto, to judge by the manner in which it is prolonged. Manasseh has called upon the Colonel to ask him to pay his son's debt of 764*l.*, and the Colonel, entering the drawing-room with the Jew, finds Harold, and bitterly reproaches him for his infamous behaviour:—

'COL. You, sir—you unmitigated scoundrel, sir; you have ventured to deceive this good, this trusting old man; you have obtained this money under false pretences, sir.

MAN. Ah, how nice it is to hear him speak!

COL. You have endeavoured to rob this worthy old gentleman of his hard-earned savings—savings, sir, which would have gone far to have made his old age comfortable, if not luxurious.

MAN. Oh, it's beautiful—beautiful. Vat eloquence! Oh, lor!

HAR. Father, what are you talking about? The fellow's a Jew bill discounter!

MAN. Oh, there now! to hear that! oh, ain't it too bad after all I've done for him! Oh, lor!—

HAR. Hold your row, man; *we* know you.

COL. I don't care what he is, sir. Look at his grey hairs, sir! look at his tottering gait, sir! look at his tears, sir! and tell me anything you can plead would speak so eloquently as those silent advocates!

MAN. Oh! never heard anything like it, s'elp me! Oh, it's beautiful, beautiful!

COL. If he had thought proper to bring his action for the amount, I should have left you to defend it. But he has been more merciful than you; he has not subjected you to the exposure of a public trial; he has generously laid the matter before me, and (to HAROLD) fortunately for you, sir—fortunately for you—for I should have left you to yourself. As it is, I am willing to submit to the only verdict which under the circumstances I am sure a British jury could conscientiously give. Sir, there is no doubt you owe this poor old man the money!

MAN. O vat a noble old gentleman! Give me the harmy for honourable hup-rightness agin all creation.

COL. (to MANASSEH) Worthy old man! It is most fortunate for you that your generous disposition prompted you to appeal to me, instead of making this discreditable business public. You would

have incurred the costs of a heavy action (which he could not possibly have paid), and at the same time, as I said before, I am willing to be bound by the only decision a jury could come to under the circumstances. My poor old friend, I am very sorry for you, but when he gave you those acceptances my imprudent boy was not of age.

MAN. Vat? not of age? Vell, I know he sin't of age; but vat of that? It's necessities—bills is necessities to such as him; you kep him short of money, and him the possible heir to a peerage!

COL. The heir to a peerage? Oh, quite a mistake, I assure you.

MAN. Vy, there's only two between him and the barony of Ovington.

COL. Very true, but, ha! ha! Lord Ovington's two healthy sons are as little likely to die during the next forty years as (pardon me) you are likely to live during that period. Besides, I have reason to believe that the elder one has just contracted a secret marriage. I am afraid, my good fellow, that the contingency on which you rely is too remote to affect the verdict.

MAN. Done! done! done! brown as a crumpet! but I'll bring my action if it costs me 500*l.*!

The atmosphere of the play appears unwholesome. 'It is, amongst other things, from the impertinent figures unskilful dramatists draw of the characters of men, that youth are bewildered and prejudiced in their sense of the world,' the 'Tatler' says; and surely if, when the mirror is held up to nature, Mr. Gilbert can make it reflect no pleasanter companions than such as these, he may well refrain from holding it up at all in the direction of everyday life.

We do not remember that any creation of his has taken a place in the gallery of dramatic personages,—we speak of his modern comedies—and indeed most of his people have done service in many plays and for many writers. 'On Guard,' brought out at the Court Theatre some two years back, may be accepted as a fair specimen of Mr. Gilbert's writing, and if it is looked at carefully it is not a matter for wonder that his *dramatis personæ*

should be ephemeral. An old writer has said that 'the parade of misplaced wit has spoiled almost as many comedies as actual dullness,' and 'On Guard' is full of the meretricious sparkle of 'modern comedy dialogue' upon which comment was made in a recent number of this Magazine.* The personages talk to each other in the rudest and most unnatural manner, with an utter disregard for 'good-breeding' and the *convenances* of society; and yet they insist upon telling each other that they are well-bred—probably because they know it would never be guessed unless they went out of the way to mention it. The heroine, Jessie, tells the most gentleman-like man of the party that his 'want of familiarity with the usages of society may hold him excused up to a certain point;' but it is really difficult to see what is to excuse the others for their persistent rudeness and ill-behaviour. Mrs. Fitzosborne, a young widow, is the chief offender, and is clearly delighted with her own powers of repartee. We think, however, that she somewhat overestimates her talent. The passages of *quasi* wit—for in this play Mr. Gilbert is far below his average—take place generally with Kavanagh, an adventurer. Here is one which evidently satisfies Mrs. Fitzosborne, and excites the hearty appreciation of her admirer, Captain Boodle. Kavanagh comes on board the yacht in which the others are sailing, and is greeted by the young widow:—

'MRS. F. Oh, Mr. Kavanagh, I'm so delighted to see you.

KAVAN. Indeed!

MRS. F. I am indeed. Now that you've joined we shall have such fun.

KAVAN. You're very good to say so.

MRS. F. Oh, no! indeed I mean it.

BOODLE. (*aside*) Wait a bit! He'll catch it presently.

MRS. F. Three weeks' yachting have blunted my faculties. Everybody is so stupid on board, and I'm glad you've come, because I want you to sharpen them for me.

KAVAN. Really, Mrs. Fitzosborne, that sounds like a compliment!

MRS. F. Does it? I like a man who's easily pleased.

BOODLE. I'th coming; I don't know what it is, but i'th coming!

KAVAN. Well, when you admit that it is in my power to sharpen your blunted faculties—

MRS. F. I credit you with all the brilliant qualities of a knifeboard! There—I'm better after that! (*sits*).

BOODLE. I'th come! He'th got it! I didn't know what it wath; but I knew it wath coming.

KAVAN. (*hurts*) I recognise the bluntness of which you complain. If it is in the power of a knifeboard to—

MRS. F. To impart point and polish to my remarks, you will be only too happy to serve me in that capacity. Wasn't that what you were going to say, Mr. Kavanagh?

KAVAN. Well—yes. (*Aside*) Confound the woman, I wish she'd let me finish.

BOODLE. You're too hard on him, Mrs. Fitz. Whenever Mr. Kavanagh hath a poor little thquib to dithcharge you alwayth take the bang out of it!

MRS. F. Mr. Kavanagh handles his squibs so awkwardly that he would certainly burn his fingers with them if I didn't take them out of his hands and finish them for him.

BOODLE. That's another; nothing could be fairer than that!

MRS. F. Oh, Baby Boodle, do go and get your breakfast while it's calm.

BOODLE. I wath only backing you up.

MRS. F. Thank you, but I'm quite equal to meeting anything Mr. Kavanagh can say without assistance.

BOODLE. He'th getting it all over him. (*Aside*) Don't spare him; he'th bad form—he'th got no friends.'

We will not pretend to share Boodle's appreciation. Mrs. Fitzosborne is quite contented, however: 'This man does give one such chances!' she says, triumphantly, after telling Kavanagh that his own jokes do not amuse him, because he has heard them so

* See 'Notes on Popular Dramatists.' October 1874.

II. Mr. James Alberly. *London Society*, for

often before. 'At all events, I may conclude from your admission that they amuse *you*, that *you* have not heard them before?' he asks. Her reply is delightful in its unconscious *naïveté*: 'No, indeed! the society in which I move is so horribly well-bred.' We must of course accept the lady's word, and can only regret that she gives such scant evidence in support of her assertion. Boodle's joke about tossing, made to a young girl, is perhaps more remarkable for vulgarity than wit. 'She hates Kavanagh,' Boodle says, 'and she thnubs him; I thnub him too,—

'—but I don't thnub him as well as thee does. Kavanagh acts upon her as a red rag acts upon a bull. I believe she'd toth him for a penny.

JESSIE. Toss him for a penny?

BOODLE. Yeth. I mean she'd gore him. I don't mean headth and tailth—and yet I *do* mean headth and tailth, when you come to think of it! Ha, ha! nothing could be fairer than that!"

'Charity,' produced at the Haymarket last January, was better written so far as dialogue went, but the construction was bad, and what interest the actors succeeded in arousing, they could not sustain. It had all the advantages of skilful representation; the caste included Messrs. Buckstone, Chippendale, Kendal, Miss Robertson, Mrs. Alfred Mellon, and other meritorious performers; but the comedy had a short life, and not a merry one.

'Randall's Thumb,' with Messrs. Hermann Vezin, Belford, Righton, Miss Litton, and other favourites in the caste, met with a tolerable reception. Human nature is regarded from a higher stand-point in 'Randall's Thumb' and 'On Guard,' than it is in 'An Old Score' and 'Charity'; consequently the two former were more acceptable; but none of them takes high rank as a comedy; none is at all above the average of the plays

which are constantly being produced by different writers at different theatres.

The subtle humour which made 'The Palace of Truth' famous has been spoken of with admiration. 'Pygmalion and Galatea' also contains much that is excellent, and many beauties of thought and expression, but it is necessary to throw away all remembrance of the original legend, from which the author has frequently departed in letter and spirit. His Pygmalion is only Grecian in his attire: he reflects and speaks like an Englishman of the nineteenth century. The fabled Pygmalion had no wife—and if he had ever married one, she would certainly not have influenced him as Cynisca did her husband in the play: the Grecian wives of antiquity held a very different position in relation to their lords. We are nevertheless inclined to place this first—with perhaps one exception—amongst the author's works, for there is a certain tenderness and sympathy with human nature about it which is very rarely to be found in his writing. The blank verse in which it is written flows smoothly, as a rule, and the mode of expression, though not frequently poetical, is adequate. It is thus that Pygmalion, looking at the image he has carved, laments the littleness of his powers:—

"The thing is but a statue, after all."

Cynisca little thought that in those words

She touched the keynote of my discontent.

True, I have power denied to other men.
Give me a senseless block of marble.

Well,

I'm a magician, and it rests with me
To say what kernel lies within the shell.
It shall contain a man—a woman—
child—

A dozen men and women if I will:

So far, the gods and I am neck and neck—

Nay—so far I can beat them at their trade.

I am no bungler—all the men *I* make
Are straight-limbed fellows, each magnificent

In the perfection of his manly grace.
I make no crook-backs—all my men are gods,

My women goddesses in outward form.
But there's my tether. *I* can go so far
And go no farther—at that point *I* stop,
To curse the bonds that hold me sternly back—

To curse the arrogance of those proud gods

Who say, "Thou shalt be greatest among men

And yet infinitesimally small."

The harshness which so constantly destroys the effect of Mr. Gilbert's work does not fail to assert itself; and when he has lost his sight, Pygmalion's rage against the innocent object of his misfortune is painful and offensive. Cynisca, returning to find Galatea endowed with life, suspects the fidelity of her husband, and calls down on him the wrath of Artemis, who blinds him. Galatea is innocent as a child: it is through no fault or failing of hers that Pygmalion suffers before his wife's wrath, and the scene which follows is a serious blot in the play. Of 'The Wicked World,' the third of Mr. Gilbert's Haymarket mythological comedies, we speak with some hesitation. The play was ingenious; on the whole it was well received, and it was impossible not to admire the fancies and humours of the production; but it was, in parts, very strongly tainted with that unpleasant flavour which is seldom absent from the author's works. The circumstances which followed its production will be fresh in the public memory. The 'Pall Mall Gazette,' a journal whose conduct is too well known to need eulogy, stigmatised the play as coarse and indecent, and, in some parts, altogether unfit for public representation. That the critic sincerely meant what he wrote cannot for a

moment be doubted, for he quoted extracts from the portions he condemned, and had they therefore not been liable to the construction he placed upon them, he and his editor would have been palpably stultified. His criticism was not harshly worded.

'No married man cares twopence for intrigues
At which his wife connives,'

was a sentiment he called 'by no means noble;' and it is not to be wondered at that he should have reprobated the line which speaks of the world as a place

'Where women are not devils—till they're dead.'

Mr. Gilbert, however, chose to see malice and personal spite in the article, although the position held by the paper negatives the possibility of his views, and he brought an action against the publisher for libel. The case was very thoroughly sifted, some of the ablest counsel of the day being engaged on both sides. Several distinguished writers and actors declared they could see no harm in the play, but nevertheless the jury found a verdict for the defendant, though at the same time they expressed an opinion that Mr. Gilbert meant no harm by his equivocal sentences. Very likely he did not; but if he has any more mythological comedies forthcoming, it will be advisable for him to submit them to the revision of some person who has a perception of what, without straining the text, may very easily be taken for impurity of thought and expression. The 'Pall Mall Gazette,' by its outspoken candour, did a distinct service to the cause of the drama.

After condemnation and half-hearted praise, it is pleasant to be able to speak in terms of un-

qualified eulogy; and it is certain that Mr. Gilbert has one very strong qualification for stage writing. As an eccentric humorist he is wholly admirable, and his power of creating mirth out of the slightest materials is really wonderful. It is apart from the object of these papers to comment on writings which have no connection with the theatre; but it would be difficult to let pass the opportunity of saying a word in praise of 'The Bab Ballads.' Both the verse and the illustrations are amongst the most delightfully funny productions of the present day, and when Mr. Gilbert can transfer the tone of them to the stage, the result is extremely diverting. 'Creatures of Impulse' is a sort of dramatised Bab Ballad, and makes an afterpiece far above the average. It was, indeed, as a writer of burlesque that Mr. Gilbert began his career as a dramatist; all his pieces of this class have merit, and best of them is the whimsical allegory founded on the Poet-Laureate's 'Princess.' The notion of tampering with so fine a work was rash; but the representation must have satisfied Mr. Tennyson's warmest admirers. The play was constructed with care and skill; the interest was well sustained, and the writing excellent. King Gama speaks of himself as 'an easy man' in the poem; Mr. Gilbert, however, makes him bitter of tongue and deformed in body. In this he departs from the Laureate's creation, but the character is striking and well preserved. In the play, Gama is summoned to King Hildebrand's palace, to account for the non-appearance of his daughter, who was betrothed in childhood to Prince Hilarion. Gama's bitter tongue lashes all with whom he is brought into contact with stinging effect. He makes Hildebrand

happy by telling him what Rumour has said of the castle; and as the King bows his acknowledgments, abruptly clinches his sentence with, 'But she's a liar!'

'How do you like your king?' he asks Cyril.

'Vile rumour says he's all but imbecile—

Now that's not true!

CYRIL. My lord, we love our king:

His wise remarks are valued by his court

As precious stones.

GAMA. And for the selfsame cause!

Like precious stones, the wit of Hildebrand

Derives its value from its scarcity!

Hildebrand expostulates at the delay which has taken place in the fulfilment of the contract; and Gama cries out that the King is going to redeem his long list of promises; and very properly, as wise men should, begin at the beginning. Then Hildebrand is enraged.

'Stop that tongue,

Or you shall lose the monkey head that holds it!

Oh, I'll be even with you yet for this.

GAMA. Bravo! your king deprives me of my head

That he and I may meet on even terms.'

Hilarion and his companion, however, determine to set off and storm the University which the Princess has founded—

'With prudes for proctors, dowagers for deans,

And sweet girl-graduates in their golden hair.'

Gama tells them to storm away bravely, as they will only be met by girls; but Hilarion explains what arms he and his companions propose to use; how they will charge their mines with sighs; use croquet mallets for battering-rams, fair flowers for blades, and *bombon* crackers for artillery. Gama does

not think these preparations will be successful. He says:—

‘And so you think to conquer them with sighs?

My good young gentleman, a sigh to them

Is simply an exceptionally marked Contraction of the intercostal muscles!

Croquet is interesting only when

It illustrates familiar theories

Of incidental and reflecting angles.

Fair flowers, to them, are mere emboldiments

Of calyx, pistil, stamina, and petal.

Expressive eyes would have their charm, no doubt—

HILDE. Of course!

GAMA. But only, be it understood, As illustrating theories of vision!’

Still Hilarion, Cyril, and Florian make their way to Castle Adamant, and the picture which is presented of the students is full of playful satire. Ada asks Chloe to come to her room and spend a long, long evening, and bring her steam-engine; and Chloe consents, anxious to see all Ada’s nice new things, ‘the quadrant and the anemometer, and, oh! that darling, darling dumpy-level I’ve heard so much about!’ Lydia complains of the extravagance of a friend who has got another new theodolite, the fifteenth that month, and laments that her own ‘went out of fashion half a year ago;’ and then Melissa runs in with information of the greatest importance:—

‘MELISSA. I say, my dear, I have *such* news for you! I’ve just been shown

The robes for doctors of divinity.

Oh, it’s the sweetest thing!—Magenta silk,

Trimmed with chinchilla, *bouillonné* behind,

Gored to the figure, though; and on the skirt,

Two rows of Cluny lace as deep as that!

CHLOE. Oh my! how lovely!

MELISSA. Then the trencher cap

Is amber satin, trimmed with Cluny lace

And rows of pearls; and round the outer edge

The tiniest, tiniest rosebuds in the world!

ADA. (to CHLOE) It’s much more lovely than the legal gown—

Green grenadine, with rúchings down the front,

That we shall wear.

CHLOE. (*pouting*) I shall give up the law

And go into the church! I’ve always felt

A serious longing for a pastor’s life;

Besides, I’m dark, and look a fright in green!’

There are more serious matters to be seen after, however; and presently Lady Blanche enters to award punishments. Sacharissa is to be expelled for introducing chessmen; and on tearfully replying that they are only made of wood, is sternly told that they are ‘men with whom you give each other mate.’ Sylvia is rusticated for daring to put three rows of lace insertion round her graduate’s gown, and Phyllis gets into terrible disgrace for having made in her drawing-book a sketch of a perambulator—a *double* perambulator! The Princess Ida’s address to her class is capitally written, the peroration especially:—

‘If we succeed,

We’ll treat him better than he treated us,

But if we fail—oh then let hope fail too!

Let no one care one penny how she looks!

Let red be worn with yellow—blue with green,

Crimson with scarlet—violet with blue!

Let all your things misfit, and you yourselves

At inconvenient moments come undone! Let hair-pins lose their virtue; let the hook

Disdain the fascination of the eye,—

The bashful button modestly evade

The soft embraces of the button hole!

Let old associations all dissolve,

Let Swan secede from Edgar—Grant

from Gask,

Sewell from Cross—Lewis from Allen-

by—

In other words, let Chaos come again!’

The pompous phrases of abstract philosophy are ludicrously bur-

lesqued, and the dialogue is full of happy touches. Mr. Gilbert does not depart far from the original framework of the legend. Psyche recognises the young men, who are now disguised as students of the Princess's class; and when she would betray them, they remind her of the old days when, with that tendency towards blue-stock-ingism which has brought her to Castle Adamant, she used to call a buttercup '*ranunculus bulbosus*;' to drive the conjuror wild by explaining how all the tricks were done; and when at dinner-parties, brought down to dessert, would tackle visitors with—

'You don't know
Who first discovered longitude—I do—
Hipparchus 'twas, B.C. one sixty-three!'

An enfant terrible indeed!

The Lady Blanche discovers the plot, however, for the disguised princes were weak on the subject of female accomplishments. They thought that Cluny lace was Valenciennes; did not know the difference between hemming and stitching; called a gusset a gore, and a tuck a flounce: Cyril, too, trolls the 'careless tavern catch, unmeet for ladies,' and the secret comes to light: but Hilarion saves Ida, who has fallen into the lake, and the young princes are permitted to depart.

King Hildebrand's method of making Gama miserable is excellent. Gama is told to make himself at home, and give what orders he pleases as to the conduct of army and state. 'They will not be obeyed, but that don't matter,' Hildebrand concludes; and as Gama's acquiescence is very faintly expressed, his host explains his meaning. 'The ecstasy of command,' Hildebrand says, 'is seriously dashed when you reflect that you are responsible for the consequences of your actions;' but

Gama is not to suffer from this drawback. At his court, Hildebrand explains, his guest is to be treated with every outward token of respect; every one will attentively receive his orders, and systematically disobey them. He may command what he likes, and as his commands will never, under any circumstances, be carried out, no evil will result from the failure of any plans he may conceive.

The confusion in the Princess's army, when it is really called upon to show the courage of its opinions and do battle for its rights, is displayed in an extremely diverting manner. Ida burns to exhibit the superiority of woman, even in the art of warfare, and calls out her troops. She then inquires for Sacharissa, her surgeon, who makes obeisance.

PRIN. We shall require your skill to
heal the wounds

Of those that fall.

SACHA. What! heal the wounded?

PRIN. Yes!

SACHA. And cut off real live legs and
arms?

PRIN. Of course!

SACHA. I wouldn't do it for a thousand
pounds!

PRIN. Why, how is this? Are you
faint-hearted, girl?

You've often cut them off in theory.

SACHA. In theory I'll cut them off
again

With pleasure, and as often as you
like—

But not in practice!

PRIN. Coward, get you hence!
I've craft enough for that, and courage
too.

I'll do your work! My Amazons, ad-
vance!

Why, you are armed with spears—mere
gilded toys!

Where are your muskets, pray?

ADA. Why, please
you, ma'am,

We left them in the armoury, for fear
That, in the heat and turmoil of the
fight,

They might go off!

PRIN. "They might!" Oh,
craven souls!
Go off yourselves! Thank heaven, I
have a heart

That quails not at the thought of meeting men.

I will discharge your muskets. Off with you!

Where's my bandmistress?

CHLOE. Please you,
ma'am, the band
Do not feel well, and can't come out to-day!

We have lingered over this, because it is pleasant to recall the best things in a good work, and to award whole-hearted commendation to an author who has gifts very greatly above the average, but whose writing, nevertheless, is rarely satisfactory. The thought of the many graceful passages in Mr. Tennyson's 'medley,' as he terms it, and especially of those most exquisite lyrics, 'Tears, idle tears,' and 'O Swallow, Swallow, flying, flying south,' makes us at first resent the idea of a whimsical allegory founded on it; but Mr. Gilbert's skilful treatment of his subject speedily subdues this feeling, and his version of 'The Princess' remains a model of a delicate, refined, and witty play. His burlesques generally are very good, and, so far as we remember, he was chiefly instrumental in raising the character of the burlesque music. It is true that Mr. Byron sometimes introduced operatic selections into his extravaganzas, but for the most part the music was chosen from the 'comic songs' of the day, and wearied the souls of musical hearers. 'The drama's laws,' however, 'the drama's patrons give:' the comic songs were, sad to say, applauded, and therefore burlesque-writers can hardly be blamed for choosing; but nevertheless Mr. Gilbert must be praised for the improvement which he did much to effect. 'Robert the Devil,' with which the Gaiety opened, contained no comic songs; in their place were selections from popular *opéra-bouffe*

music, and one or two numbers from Meyerbeer and other composers—the 'A fosco cielo' chorus from 'La Sonnambula' was capitally managed in a wax-work scene, where the characters are revived at twelve o'clock.

Another most ingenious little work, which probably no one living but Mr. Gilbert could have imagined, is 'Ages Ago,' produced by those excellent artists, the German Reeds, at the Gallery of Illustration. Mr. Fred. Locker has written a very charming poem entitled 'My Grandmother,' and beginning—

'This relation of mine,
Was she seventy and nine
When she died?
By the canvas may be seen
How she looked at seventeen
As a bride!'

and it occurs to us as possible that Mr. Locker's poem may have given rise to Mr. Gilbert's little extravaganza, which shows how, on a certain night, the portraits in an old picture-gallery are endowed with life, and step out of their frames. Love, as well as life, animates them; and before one o'clock next morning the four personages of different centuries have merged into two couples of devoted lovers. An antique beau, painted at the age of sixty or so by Sir Joshua, becomes enamoured of a lady of a certain age, painted some generations before in the character of a shepherdess, and these two seek to check the attachment between their fellow-ghosts, who are young and ardent; but it appears that the middle-aged shepherdess lived long after the blushing little Lady May, who severely reproves her elder relative for disrespect shown to her grandmother—the grandmother in question being some thirty years younger than her granddaughter. The ancient beau and the young lord

are upon the point of fighting, only luckily the heinousness of wounding one of his remote ancestors becomes apparent to the old gentleman—indeed all the ingenious complications which spring from the idea are worked out by Mr. Gilbert. More excellent fooling than this has rarely been seen upon the stage; and clever satire on the Royal Academy, and existing institutions which lay themselves open to sarcasm, was admirably administered.

Mr. Gilbert is also generally credited with the authorship of the plays which have been signed by Mr. 'Latour Tomline.' These have generally been adaptations of Palais-Royal comedy-farces. 'The Wedding March,' which started the series, was extremely diverting; the author caught precisely that spirit of half-mad fun which made 'Le Chapeau de Paille' so great a success at its original home. 'The Blue-legged Lady' was weak and rather foolish; but there is reason to suppose that no one can adapt pieces of the Palais-Royal class with more skill. It is to be presumed that Mr. 'Latour Tomline's' name was originated that Mr. Gilbert might not seem to be connected with the authorship of 'The Happy Land,' the parody on Mr. Gilbert's mythological comedy, 'The Wicked World.' This parody, it may be remembered, was immensely successful, and contained much wit; a great deal of its popularity was owing, however, to extraneous circumstances—to the interest created by the action of the Lord Chamberlain, who forbade the actors to 'make up' to resemble Messrs. Gladstone, Lowe and Ayton,—and the burlesque was produced at a lucky moment, just

when public indignation against the late Government was beginning to assert itself.

Shakespeare made capital out of supernatural beings and mystic powers—Prospero, Titania, Ariel, Puck, indefinite Rumour and Chorus, &c.; but it is chiefly with the hopes, fears, and passions actuating mortal man that the dramatist has to deal; and, as we have said, in the comedy of modern life, Mr. Gilbert having, we cannot but believe, the power to succeed, has been unsuccessful because, despite his wit and fancy, his characters are not interesting, and their doings fail to awaken or stir the sympathies of his audience. Sheridan was ever cynical; and some of those who analyse motives deeply do not take the popular view of Charles Surface's nature; but to playgoers who have not Charles Lamb's critical brain, Charles seems generous, unselfish, and high-spirited. Sheridan strove to make him so, to the best of his power, but his own somewhat perverted sense of morality scarcely allowed him to draw a noble-minded man. He was, however, much too wise to let cynicism swamp every other quality in his work. Mr. Gilbert may assure himself that the dazzle of ready wit will not alone make a satisfactory play. When he tries to teach a lesson, as in 'Charity,' it is done in such a repulsive way as to be unsuccessful. Let Mr. Gilbert strive to take a more charitable view of human nature, and believe a little more in the possibility of goodness in his fellow-creatures. It is to be presumed that the experiences of the last year have not been thrown away upon him, and we sincerely hope that he may profit by them.

PETTON WREY.



Drawn by R. Caldecott.]



RAPE OF THE GAMP.

CHAPTER XV.

LE VOLEUR CHEZ LUI.

CHRISTMAS came at last, though Janet had many times fancied it would never come; for these few last weeks had dragged out a very lorn and pitiful existence, as far as she was concerned. At last, however, pride, that theological vice, that social virtue, which gives nerve to so many a downcast, faltering knight, came to the rescue of Janet. Miss Lyte was still her father's guest, and intended to remain till after Christmas, meanwhile keeping open an invitation for either Janet or Nelly to return with her to Pitsville at the end of her visit; for Miss Lyte was a pleasant and sociable—alas! I was about to say 'old,' of course I mean 'middle-aged'—lady, and though belonging to what is called 'The Religious World' in that gay and fascinating resort of sinners, still managed to have a few agreeable people about her pleasant Pitsville villa, and was not at all averse to the company of a pretty and well-mannered girl, even if the gentle reprobate had as yet not been brought to see and amend the error of her ways.

Janet thought she would avail herself of Miss Lyte's kind proposal. She would not decide. Poor fluttering, longing, gentle, loving heart! If *he* would not come, she would go, were it merely to show him that she did not care. While she cared so much: *atra cura* — I apologize — while black care sits on her pretty rounded shoulder, and whispers such hard, dissonant phrases into her coral ear that her very gall-bladder seems to have burst and suffused her heart (were such a

catastrophe possible) with bitterness. But she *could* not promise. He might come. He might be too busy till the end of the school term. Possibly Albert had offended him. Oh, what vengeance would be sufficient to wreak upon Albert if it were so? Not, of course, to atone for Janet's misery, but merely to requite the injustice, the paltry disparagement, of one so far above it and above its author! Yet Janet did not in her heart believe that Albert could have erected a barrier over which Mr. Lane would not step lightly, without giving it a serious thought. Nor could Miss Lyte by any possibility be an obstruction to him; for she openly professed the warmest interest in and admiration of him. She was never tired of asking Janet such nice questions about him, and encouraging Hubert to speak kindly about his friend and tutor.

But now the vacation had come; indeed, some days had elapsed since the school had broken up, and Mr. Lane had gone to London without even leaving a P.P.C. card at the door, though usually he was so polite, and so particular in not omitting any courtesy, any token of respect, to Mrs. Browne. So pride came to Janet's aid. She trimmed her feathers, like any one of Mr. Lane's canaries, and made herself gay in what little sunlight the season afforded.

With Christmas came Blanche, Mrs. George Baily, junior, and Robert Browne, lieutenant and adjutant of the gallant —th, to the bosom of their family. Of Blanche suffice it to say that she was tall and fair, like Janet, but

taller, with hair more auburn, a more oval face, and a longer upper lip. Moreover, she had a melancholy air, owing, as the Pedlington quidnuncs averred (though Frank Browne stoutly denied this), to her husband's habitual neglect. Like other established belles, also, Blanche appeared to feel her existence upon the surface of the earth to be a favour ill requited by an ugly planet. But in truth our story little concerns this beautiful though not pre-eminently happy young lady, and we are scarcely justified in taking her photograph on so short an acquaintance.

Robert, familiarly termed 'The Robber' (for which endearing synonym the patient reader will presently see a reason), was a gay, burly soldier, with a broad round bronzed face, deep-set grey eyes of the twinkling order, a short light-coloured curly moustache, and whiskers to match. He looked particularly handsome with his hat on, did Robert; and perhaps the less said about his hair the better. No male member of this elegant family could baffle baldness after his twenty-first year. Albert and Frank, each in his day, had hearkened to the seductive voice of the hair-dresser, and purchased bottles of miraculous and costly preparations in vain. They had both grown sceptical. As to Robert, he was by nature a Gallio. Let the locks adorn his manly brow, or retire to his ruddy poll: it was all one to him. From the period of legal maturity baldness had crept stealthily upon each of these young men, like punishment upon the evil-doer, with slow but inevitable footsteps. You could trace its gradual progress upon the heads of Robert, Frank, and Albert, according to seniority, while the meretricious character of Mr. Browne's locks had been

obvious for more than a quarter of a century. Frank, with his usual happy turn for pleasantry, used to observe that the *capillary attraction* was all on the female side of the family: and happily the girls made up in this respect for the deficiency of their brothers; indeed, the three younger sisters were endowed with their luxuriant tresses in some of nature's most lavish moods.

On Christmas Day the whole of this estimable family adorns itself magnificently (as described in Chapter II.), and repairs to church at a quarter before eleven in the forenoon, as all respectable families in Christendom (no doubt) do. But seeing that all such families in this particular district of this particular borough occupy pews in the body of Mr. Marmaduke's church, and seeing that Mr. Browne's party is swelled by the influx of Miss Lyte, Blanche Baily, and Robert Browne, a question arises—How are all to be accommodated with seats?

Now the younger gentlemen habitually attend the old parish church. It was *the church* long before Mr. Marmaduke, or even his heroes, Wesley and Whitfield, had been born or thought of. Their conservatism was offended by Mr. Key's revival of the ancient Catholic ritual, in which perhaps he was somewhat hasty and impetuous; but nevertheless they stood by the bold little man, and sneered at the old fogies who left the church; and Janet was so charmed with the altar and the surpliced choir, and the music and the increased reverence and devoutness of the service, that latterly she had been their unfailing companion. To-day, with a strange perversity, she wanted to hear Mr. Marmaduke preach ('peach' she pronounced it). But the Robber closed his left eye,

twinkled at her with the other, and said that he would back her to go in and win, though Mr. Forsyth, the golden-tongued curate, was considered so eligible by a crowd of fair devotees. Blanche and Nelly also preferred the district church; and it must be admitted that all the cavalry soldiers with their gallant leaders made a handsome show at the latter place of worship, and that the rolling of their drums and squeaking of their fifes was a pleasant sound after the evangelist's prolix and monotonous beating of 'the pulpit, drum ecclesiastic.'

All the ladies, however, could not be furnished with seats even in Mr. Browne's ample pew, so Robert vowed himself ready to escort his 'ancient Joan,' little thinking that severe relative to be within ear-shot.

'Thank you, Robert,' said Joan, with asperity, entering the open doorway of the parlour as he spoke. At her inopportune entry Nelly exploded with laughter, in which Janet imprudently joined. Finally it was arranged that both Mrs. Browne and sister Joan should accompany the younger gentlemen.

'Ancient!' thought Joan to herself, bridling, as she marched along. And only two minutes ago she was thinking how young and fresh her reflection in the mirror looked. 'Ancient, indeed! What idle, worthless creatures are military men! *Nothing* to do but to gad about among tittering girls, and say the *most silly* things. And *they* must needs laugh, as if they thought him witty. Absurd chits!'

Then turning to her mother, Joan asked, 'Do you know why Janet refused to come to the old church to-day?'

'No, my dear,' her mother answered.

'Because the school is broken up, and Mr. Lane is going away to London,' said she of the hawk eye.

Mrs. Browne remonstrated: 'But you don't mean to say, my dear, that she goes to church to meet a gentleman, or, indeed, that Mr. Lane would do such a thing. I am sure I think them both incapable of it. I have the highest opinion of Mr. Lane.'

'And do you know,' continued the betrayer, waxing more wrathful, 'why the walk before breakfast has been discontinued?'

'I suppose it was a passing whim, and died out like so many others.' And the good lady, having said this, gave vent to her little sigh.

'Albert used to take her round by the cliff every morning; and they used to meet just here, on this very spot. I was in the churchyard one morning, speaking to Graves about dear Alfred's tablet, and I saw them.'

'You out before breakfast, Joan?' And Mrs. Browne looked at her eldest daughter with unfeigned surprise.

Joan coloured crimson, and then grew pale as marble, biting her nether lip, and resolved to speak no more, having already said so much more than she had intended. Her little triumph in betraying Janet's secret was now subdued with shame, and soon dwindled into a mere speck of spleen; for Mrs. Browne walked on briskly but silently, and smiled with amusement or some pleasurable emotion. The simple, trustful mother was merely thinking to herself, 'I wish none of my dear girls, rich or poor, a worse husband than Mr. Lane. She did not once think of him as a school drudge, or even as a man poor and strange, but as of one upright and steadfast, on whom man or woman

might rely. And so she would have said to Joan, had it not been for a suspicion of jealousy on the part of her eldest daughter, which now for the first time seriously entered her mind. As for Janet, she had enough money to marry a poor man if she wished to do so; and if she had been dowerless, still Mr. Lane had expectations, and meanwhile might make a good income, or could do so when he had graduated at Oxford. And there was no hurry for Janet to marry: she was a mere child yet.

So Mrs. Browne mused, loving her children too tenderly to wish them married, and hoping that if ever they should leave her it would be with men after her own heart. For all simple and noble characters, or what seemed such to her, this lady entertained a profound respect, and very little for mere incidental rank or wealth; and as the reader has already seen, she regarded Mr. Lane for Hubert's sake. The more she thought of him as Janet's lover, the more sunny bright grew her countenance, as though the angels' song had reached her yester-eve watching over her girls by night; and as if she had indeed come with a heart full of joy and peace to worship the King of kings on this His natal morn.

She took Hubert's arm lovingly; for the stripling was tall, and his mother short. As they entered the sacred building she whispered to Hubert, 'Show me Mr. Lane's seat.' He passed in before her; and as they swept round the north-east angle, under the painted window, Hubert, putting his hand on the finial of the bench, turned to her and smiled. So the gentle mother sat in Janet's seat, and prayed fervently for the wilful girl and her lover, whoever and wherever he might be.

But as the face of Mrs. Browne had kindled with that celestial light of love, so that of Joan had grown dark, as we say when that light fades entirely out of the human countenance.

'Sister—sold again!' Robert whispered to Frank, after staring devoutly into the crown of his hat for the space of ten seconds. 'Sold again!' The brothers had overheard a part of the conversation between the two ladies, and noticed that their mother was pleased and Joan vexed. The Robber's conscience was quite easy during his devotions, which he performed rigidly, as described in a previous chapter, although in his thoughtless mood he had first aroused that demon anger with which Joan was now possessed. However, the reader must not anticipate any tragical poisonings or poniardings. In a respectable and united family these little domestic skirmishes seldom proceed to more active hostilities. There are very few such cases on record in the archives of the county prison which is situated in the borough of Pedlington.

As you would naturally have expected from this report of the spirit which each lady took into the house of prayer, Mrs. Browne felt happier when they left church, Joan more gloomy. The young men, conscious that they had been doing the right sort of thing in the right sort of way, chuckled with self-satisfaction as they walked home to lunch.

A glorious day was that Christmas Day, frosty and bright. In the afternoon the girls accompanied their brothers for a walk. My Lord Blackpoole's park was thrown open, and they penetrated (by special permission) to 'The Happy Valley,' an inner circle from which the *plebs* were excluded.

Finches chirped and robins sang in the leafless trees. A tiny half-frozen cascade tumbled over a ledge of rock into a half-frozen lake below. The sinking sun shed a golden glow along the summits of the wood.

'Blissful resort!' sighed the Robber, with a serio-comic and reflective air. 'Reminds one of Andromache and Ænone and Aspasias, doesn't it, Frank?'

'Can't say I devote much time to the classics,' replied Frank, who was fairly puzzled at Robert's outburst of sentiment.

'Andromache, you see, was Number One,' continued the marauder, bestowing a friendly twinkle upon Nelly and Janet, which explained to their keen wit that his classical names were merely facetious adaptations. 'When a gay and sportive youth I used to meet that charmer in these classic shades. She too was young and tender. Her mother found us out, wrote an anonymous letter to the governor, and flogged Andromache, which I considered the unkindest cut of all.'

The girls voted him to be so ridiculous that he pursued the same vein. 'Ænone was Number Two,' he said. 'She used to wander forlorn in these solitary glens. I happened also to be prowling about these diggings. Consequently we met. She was the daughter of a river-god, I was told: old Pincott, in point of fact, who preserves four miles of the Thames in Oxfordshire.'

'Why, you mean Clementina!' said Janet. 'You don't mean to say she used to come out here alone to meet you?'

'By the name of Clem was she known to mortals,' continued Robert. 'I called her Ænone, and these slopes the knolls of Ida. I tumbled into this pool of reedy Simois one evening when picking

her forget-me-nots. I caught a cold. She "caught it" from her governess, and forgot me, and went back to Father Thames.'

'Why did you call her Ænone?' asked Nelly.

'Because she was always sighing for Paris, beautiful Paris!' replied the Robber, with another fraternal twinkle.

'How ridiculous you are!' exclaimed Janet. The young lady in question was a cousin of the Ormsbys, and had been on a visit to them before Robert went to India. Having at that time just returned from a boarding-school in Paris, she was in the habit of regretting her absence from that gay capital.

Frank was perhaps the only one of the party who fully appreciated Robert's pun at the moment; but Janet and Nelly referred to a classical dictionary before dinner-time, and perused Monsieur Lemprière's version of the story alluded to, which so affected Janet that she forgot all about the Robber and his witticism.

'But who was Number Three with the wonderful name?' asked Nelly, when Robert paused.

'Aspasias!' he exclaimed, smiting his breast. 'Her name haunts me still. But that sun-stroke you know, which I had at Kur-rachee——'

'Fiddlestick!' interrupted Nelly; 'Champagne-stroke, you mean.' And they all laughed except Robert. For the report of this affliction, though credited by Mrs. Brownne, was considered as purely legendary and mythical by the rest of the family.

'That terrible knock-me-down,' continued the Robber, quite unabashed, 'has deprived me of all recollection of the circumstances which attended my third, last, and most fatal passion.'

So saying, Robert poked Frank

playfully in the side with his elbow, and deftly changed the subject.

'Why don't the men propose? Eh, Nelly? eh, Janet?' he asked. 'If you decoy them to this happy valley, how can they be obdurate? The very place for softly-spoken words, to the sound of falling waters, or the beating of your own hearts.'

'Perhaps the men *do* propose, you see,' said Janet, archly; 'but you can't *tell*, you see. You don't know anything about it. Does he, Nelly?'

'That's just what I say,' pursued Robert. 'If the winter wind is less unkind than man's ingratitude, as the poet has unkindly observed of a noble sex, what can equal a woman's heartless frivolity? Think of your brother, the poor war-stained, weather-beaten soldier, struck down by the tropic sun.'

'Ahem!' coughed Albert; and again they all laughed.

'Or smoking his humble cutty by the midnight camp fire——'

'More in your line,' suggested Frank.

'Or shivering in the cold dark trench, or scaling the breach in a storm of bullets, and not a letter came from either of you heartless girls to cheer the soldier in his exile. And then, when Claude Melnotte returns, you laugh, and chaff, and mock his prematurely grey hairs.'

'Bald pate, you mean,' retorted Nelly.

'Yes, my Nelly,' continued the Robber, baring his manly brow. 'Venerable absence of oakum!' here he passed his gloved hand over the barren surface. 'And that which should accompany old age, honour, obedience, and confiding sisters, I dare not look for, but in their place, chaff.'

'Shakespeare! if I am not mis-

taken,' Albert solemnly ejaculated. But the girls were not sufficiently versed in English literature to detect the Robber's garbled and fragmentary quotations. So they were unable to appreciate the covert apology in his last sentence; and Nelly flew at him like a little bantam.

'Then you shouldn't get into debt out in India!' she cried, 'giving papa epileptic fits, and making him sell money out of the Funds, when he has spent more on you than on all of us put together. And who do you think is to go barefoot and hungry to pay for your cigars, and champagne, and horses?'

At each of the three closing nouns substantive, Nelly's voice rose to a higher pitch, till she quite squeaked out the terrible word 'horses,' at the same time threatening her brother with ferocious gestures. It was a cruel attack. Twice, indeed, the Robber had outrun the constable. Each time, when fate was about to overtake him with its sure though limping footstep, a penitent letter had emerged from Mr. Browne's foreign budget. Also a lawyer's summary, containing a schedule of the prodigal's debts, in which the items specified by Nelly had figured to a considerable extent.

The veteran held his ground, however, and went on as if he had suffered no assault: 'In their place, chaff! And as I before hinted, ingratitude, more cutting than the winter wind! Janet relents, I see. The Queen of Hearts protects the Knave.'

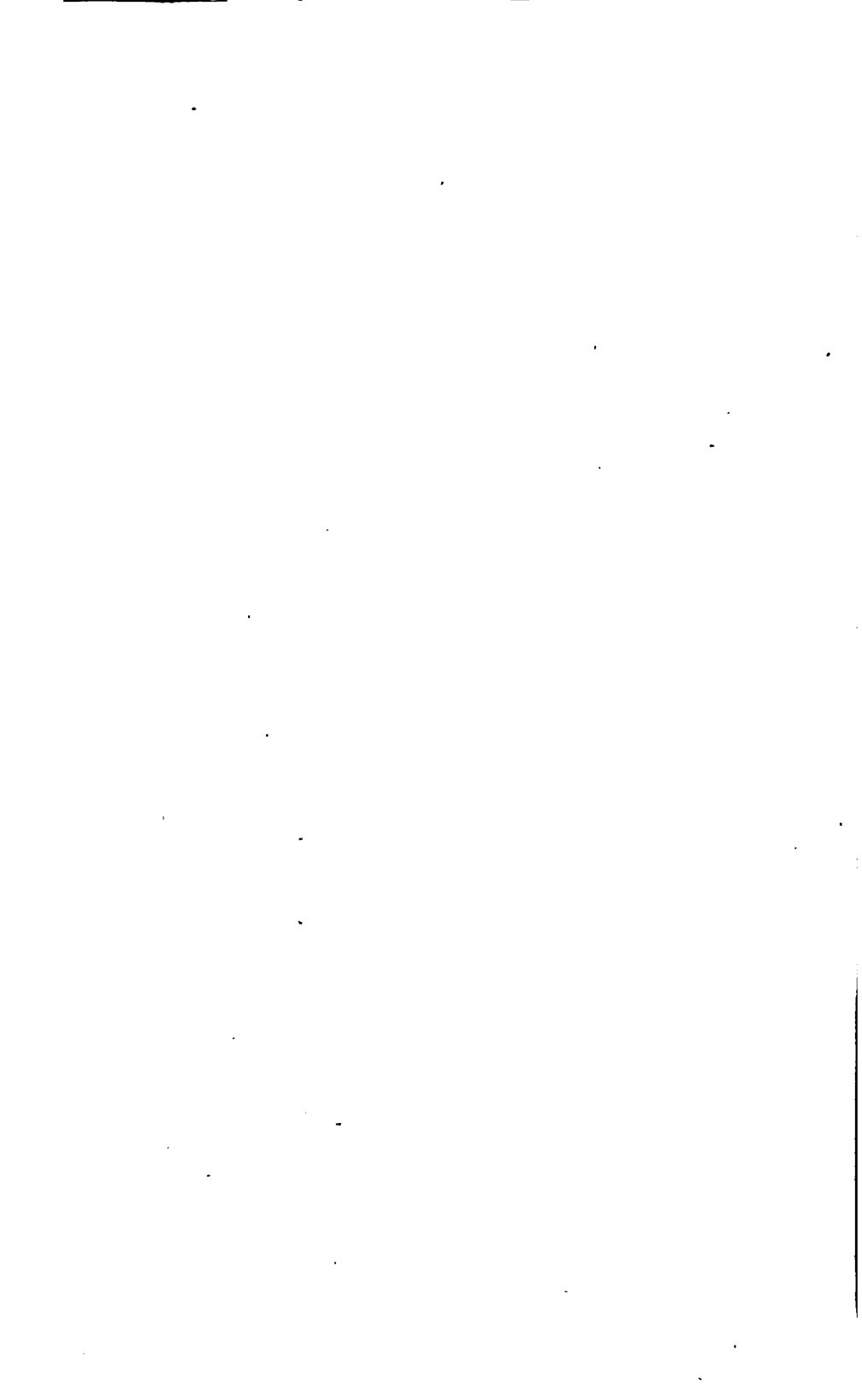
Janet did understand this last *jeu d'esprit*, and not unnaturally appreciated it fully. The old bandit was so brave, so magnanimous, so cheery. He wouldn't even break a lance with pretty Nelly, but took her points in his

bleeding bosom, and seeing Janet's look of sympathy, turned to her with a funny compliment. Even Mr. Lane could not equal this free-booter at a pinch. And Janet did like people to be ridiculous and to amuse her. It was so tiresome being always dull and cross. The Robber did try to amuse them all, even at his own expense, and it was too bad of Nelly to attack him so fiercely. All men sowed their wild oats—at least so Frank said. But Janet did not believe it—not as Frank meant it; and having consulted her mother on this subject, was confirmed in the impression that it is your rakes and *roués* who spread the report that all men have been, or are, as they are. She knew one who never had been rake or *roué*. Still it was quite a treat to have Robert at home. She had a natural domestic sort of affection for 'the silly old thing.' 'But it is not what I call love,' she said to herself. 'I think I like him best because he is not here quite so much as the others, and because he thinks less about himself. But he is one of us; and we are all alike. It is all self, after all. I cannot reverence such a man, though he is brave and cheery; and if I can't, I won't love.'

The ill-used warrior failed to extract much information from Janet on the subject of 'Fuller's friend,' as he called Mr. Lane. He and Captain Fuller had met before, and now he only knew Mr. Lane as Hubert's tutor, and as one whom Fuller honoured with his friendship. But this irritated Janet, for she disliked the cavalry-man in spite of his gallantry to her. It was not, as Frank had erroneously conjectured, because Fuller had been a friend of Bedford Lyte's in boyhood, and still entertained a sneaking regard for that reprobate. On the contrary, she put this down

to his credit as a token of manliness and fidelity; and indeed she was disposed to give the bearded sex generally a certificate of generosity superior to that of women. But in her own mind she held a secret tribunal with closed doors, more arbitrary than any Star Chamber, more implacable than any Vehmgericht. In it she impanelled ghostly juries, employed shadowy counsellors, tried, convicted, and pronounced judgment to her own complete satisfaction on the scantiest circumstantial evidence, on concurrences of hearsay and suspicion. *À leur insu* all her acquaintances underwent this fiery ordeal, and often fared iniquitously, being unable to provide for their own defence. Already in her council-chamber had this judicial sovereign pronounced sentence of banishment from her favour upon Captain Fuller and most of his companions in arms. One by one, long ago, each of her brothers had stood in that cruel dock, against whom the evidence had been more than sufficient. Only their gentleman-like behaviour to their sisters had recommended them to mercy, and their sentence had been commuted to loss of respect, while they were retained in partial favour, as it were, on sufferance.

A certain craft or method in Robert's madness amused his sisters in their playful moods. Reports of his desperate frolics in India and elsewhere, and too palpable evidences of his extravagance, reached the quiet house in Pedlington together with printed scraps of general orders and copies of despatches attesting to his many and brilliant services. Footnotes under the roll of his regiment in the army list proclaimed his feats of valour. Ribbons and medals adorned his manly breast. Since their return from India his

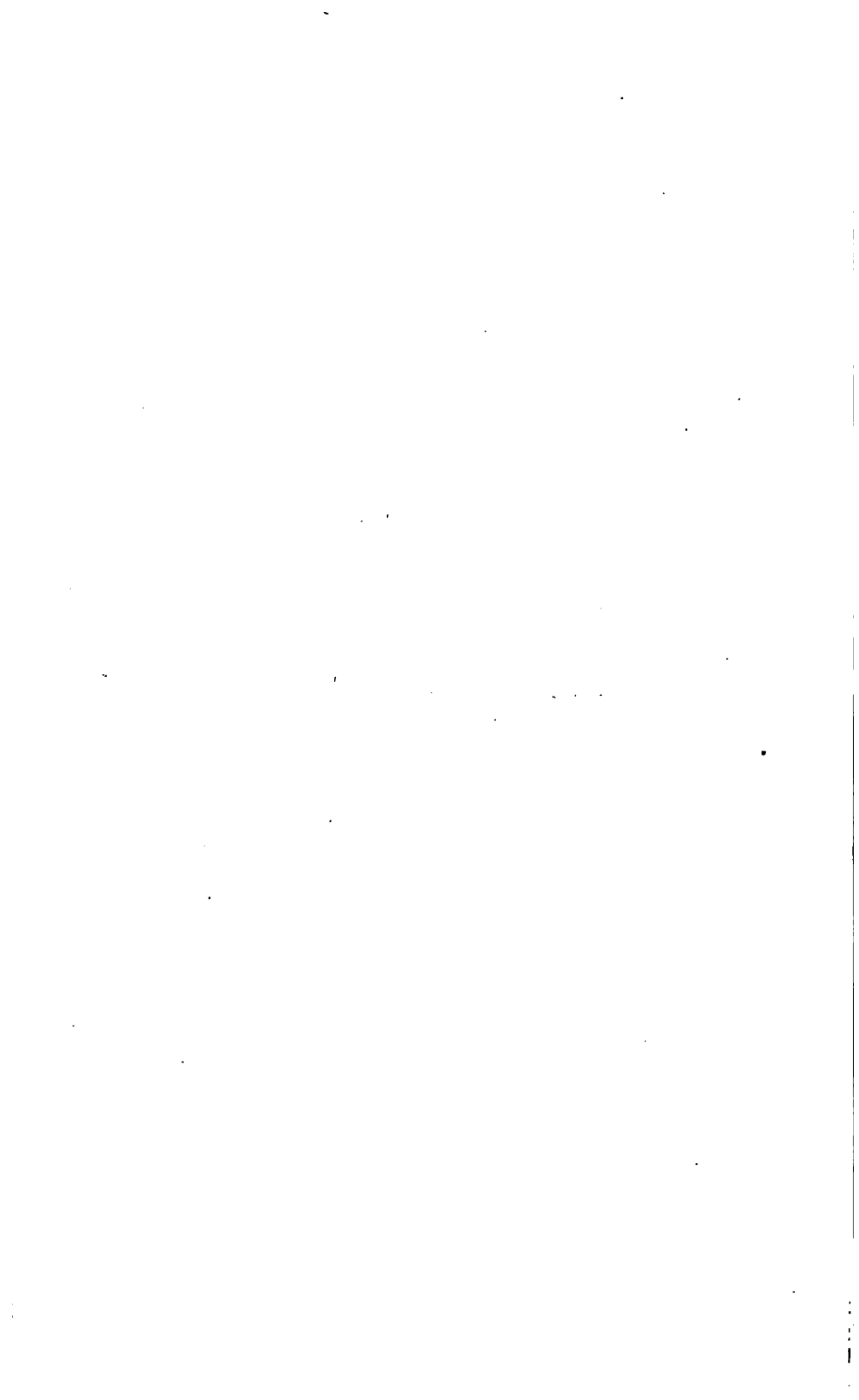






RAPE OF THE GAMP.

'I was in the churchyard one morning, speaking to Graves about dear Alfred's tablet, and I saw them.'



regiment had been the envy of a camp, and Robert, the adjutant, had been complimented in person by H.R.H. the Commander-in-Chief; so that although Mr. Browne had twice been constrained to sell money out of the Funds to pay his debts, Robert was in some sense an honour to his house. Lately this had been recognised by their bachelor uncle, the Squire, who had settled upon the hero an annuity of 200*l.* for life. Still he came home in a threadbare shooting-suit, with only a few shillings in his pocket, and his old tail-coat in a decrepit little valise. A very tame cat he appeared on these occasions, frequenting, as he said, the ancestral hearth and tapping the paternal swipes. He also preferred the society of his sisters to that of the men at the cavalry depôt, went anywhere with the girls or staid at home with them, and furtively showed them his collection of photographs, portraits of strange ladies in marvellous costumes; also among his arcana were curious little square pieces of pasteboard inscribed with certain hieroglyphics and the printed address of a person whom he called 'Nunky-punky.' As this name was not at all familiar to them, and this confidence was invariably accompanied with a knowing wink, Nelly explained to Janet that 'Nunky,' etc. was a dealer in second-hand watches and mosaics. They were precluded from consulting Frank or Albert on this doubtful topic, as the campaigner had previously bound them to secrecy. In short, without trespassing the bounds of strict propriety, he treated them with singular confidence and loyal consideration. In return they laughed at his penitential airs, said that he only staid at home to save his mess bills and shirk his

duty, and that as soon as he could draw any more money he would be off to his dissolute companions, gambling and riding and drinking champagne instead of paying his debts. Nelly added her firm belief was that he had defrauded that mythical relative whose grotesque cards he carried in the pocket where his watch ought to have been.

'With all your faults, however, you wicked old Robber,' Nelly used to say—'with all your faults, we love you still.'

And they were all glad to have him at home on Christmas Day, for his merry eyes could always find something to twinkle at, and they seldom twinkled alone. Janet, as we know, though Robert knew it not, was particularly in need of some one to cheer and enliven her solitude.

CHAPTER XVI.

A MASKED BATTERY.

ON that same day of peace and good-will, at eight o'clock in the evening, dinner being disposed of and dessert placed upon the table, Mr. Browne rose, according to an ancient custom in his family, and proposed 'Absent friends'

The governor of the feast, to his wife, who observed him with those loving eyes of hers, looked pale and careworn, but so stern and resolute a command did the brave old man exert both over features and feelings that all the others thought him gay and joyous.

Now Robert also rose, so that the two gentlemen were on their legs at the same time. Robert read little, but remembered all that he read, and much of what he heard, and was for ever quoting some poet or classic prose writer. Now closing one eye, and

looking round the table, with the other, he amended the toast: 'Friends, lovers, and countrymen,' he suggested—'especially those interesting persons in the middle.'

Mr. Browne gaily took him up. 'Absent friends, lovers, and countrymen,' he said. Then all the gentlemen stood up and drank the toast in honest port—port which had ripened under the quiet old house for twenty years and more.

Now, to the general surprise, Joan came forward. 'Suppose,' she said, 'for a little novelty and a little novel interest, we were to give a name all round?'

'Hear, hear!—name all round!' echoed the Robber.

'Very good,' responded Paterfamilias. 'I have no doubt it will conduce to general good feeling and mutual understanding.' And he smiled at Mrs. Browne, who sat opposite to him in her place at the head of the long table. She also perhaps looked rather nervous, but knew no cause for alarm; and seeing her husband apparently cheered, began herself to look brighter.

They sat at table, going round from right to left thus: Mr. Browne, Joan, Albert, Nelly, Frank; Mrs. Browne, Blanche, Robert, Janet, Hubert, Miss Lyte. The elder lady had chosen Mr. Browne's left hand to avoid sitting with her back to the door, saying that the cool air from the hall would not hurt a gentleman's covered shoulders. But the chair on Mr. Browne's right had fallen to Joan, and the Robber ruthlessly whispered to Janet that 'Sister was sold again.'

'Now then,' said Paterfamilias, in that happy vernacular so familiar to English ears—'now then, name, from right to left. I fear I cannot give you the pleasure of a surprise. You will all have guessed rightly that I drank to the head

of my family—to Uncle Robert, whose absence we all regret.'

'Thank you, sir,' Robert the benefited cried out, with some relief, for he had purposed to name his benefactor himself, but considered that his father having done so, released him from obligation, and left the field open to adventure.

Everybody was looking at Joan, who evidently sat nerving herself for an effort. 'Being *ancient*,' she said, with a grim smile, 'and having no fear of being misunderstood, I drank the health of a gentleman who very naturally admires our dear Janet, and makes no effort to conceal his admiration, and I am sure with a little encouragement would——'

General disturbance and signs of disapproval, in the midst of which Robert shouted, 'Shame! shame!—name! name!'

'Oh!' continued Joan, 'if I am to be put down in this way, I decline to say any more, except that I always prefer gentlemen who have *no mystery or secrecy* about them——'

'Name! name!' cried Robert and Hubert in a breath.

'Captain Fuller.'

Janet blushed angrily, but Nelly, leaning forward and staring at Joan across Albert's white waistcoat, said, 'Why, my dear Joan, we have all seen through your little dissimulation long ago, and set you down for another tall man who happens to be as solemn and taciturn as a judge.'

'Thank you, Nelly,' replied Joan, with a desperate effort to look amused, but losing her colour perceptibly, and tightening her lips.

'Order, ladies, if you please!' cried Albert, rising gallantly between the combatants. 'I—ahem!—I, as you are all aware, am—a Cipher.'

'A humble cousin of Lu-cifer's,' said Frank.

'I have, as I was about to say, many agreeable acquaintances, and many—ahem!—amiable relatives, but no friends, absent or present, except my father and mother——'

'No, no!' shouted the Robber, with comic indignation.

'Excuse me, Robert,' persisted Albert gently, 'no *friends* except the authors of my being.'

'Quite a *Dodo solitarius*,' remarked Frank; and again general good-humour began to prevail.

'As to lovers,' Albert continued, 'I have mentioned to several attractive young ladies that if other matters or negotiations of a matrimonial tendency should not turn out according to their wishes and expectations, and if they would favour me with a few lines to that effect, I should be proud to conduct them to the hymeneal altar——'

'Old polygamist!' interrupted Frank.

'No, Frank,' resumed the orator, 'you certainly should not misunderstand me.' And Albert looked impressively at his censor, as though he could say more an if he would. But Frank was in no way perturbed. Then Albert resumed, with more care, 'Out of four or five young ladies to whom I may have addressed that observation——'

'You said you *had*, just now,' Frank calmly observed.

'Out of four or five young ladies,' poor Albert persisted, 'to whom I *have* addressed that observation, or words to that effect—let me see.' And he stood for a few seconds, bland, elegant, white-waistcoated, counting his propositions with the fingers of his right hand in the palm of his left. Having thus refreshed his memory, he proceeded: 'Out of those five, two are already—ahem!—*more than brides*.'

'Hear, hear!' shouted the Robber; and Mrs. Browne and all the young ladies laughed.

'And, as I should have said before,' continued Albert carefully, and resolved not to be laughed into further inaccuracy, 'if matters relating to a prospective matrimonial alliance should not eventuate according to *her* wishes and expectations with either of the remaining three, and that wounded heart will intrust itself to my care, its owner will have no occasion to apply to me that expression (of, I believe, Greek derivation) which Frank made use of, in his light and graceful manner, doubtless misunderstanding the tenor of my words.'

'But, my dear Albert,' said his mother, smiling upon the panting orator, 'what *have* all these revelations to do with the toast?'

'My dear mother,' he replied, 'you are all so impatient! Impetuosity, I may say, characterises this age, this borough, even this happy and united family.' (Again Mrs. Browne's watchful eye caught, or fancied that it caught, the shadow of some coming calamity on her husband's countenance. But Albert went on without apprehension.) 'The ladies to whom I have ventured to allude being either already more than brides' ('Hear, hear!') 'or about to become the brides of happier men, can scarcely be spoken or thought of as my "lovers." I have already explained that I am without absent "friends." Being, therefore, without absent friends or lovers, I drank—ahem——'

'Out with it, old Circumlocution!' cried Robert.

'I pledged my countrymen.'

And Albert sat down in the glow of rhetorical success, wiping his denuded brow with one of those fine cambric 'hankshifs' which poor little Janet had lavished her money and labour upon for him during those halcyon days when they had walked arm in arm of a morning, like brother and sister

dwelling together in unity. There were a dozen of them, at 4*l.* 16*s.* per dozen; and in the corner of each she had embroidered a Cipher so beautifully, that Messrs. Ludlam, Hill, or Harborough might have sold the handkerchiefs for a sovereign apiece.

Nelly, being called upon in her turn, and having duly blushed, laughed, and shrugged her pretty shoulders, observed to an orange on her plate that she drank to her lovers.

'Now this is becoming too general,' said Frank rising. 'I think it was a shame of Albert, considering his years and wisdom, to begin it. Nelly may be excused for following suit on account of the universality of her taste. I believe that's the correct expression. I tell her she is like a comet, you know, which has a considerable following or tail, but cannot describe a regular orbit, or seem to do so, whichever may be the case with the stars.'

Here Frank paused, and the Robber remarked, parenthetically, for Nelly's comfort, that the Milky Way was supposed to consist entirely of comets. It was all one to Nelly. She had never heard of that luminous track before.

'This,' resumed Frank, 'has been a day of revelations. Robert has already, during our afternoon ramble, given us a most affecting narrative of three of his first loves; and now——'

'Order!' Robert exclaimed; 'order! Not three of.'

'I stand corrected,' said Frank. 'He confesses to none since Number Three. "Of his three first loves," I should have said. And now Albert, our family Lothario, in graceful periods, and with a touching melancholy, like the dying perfume of a crushed flower, admits that in the course of a long and laborious career he has contrived

to spare five delicious moments to love, and left three disconsolate hearts to bewail those *engrossing cares*'—here Frank paused, but nobody saw the joke, so he went on with disgust—'which have snatched him from their embraces. Without any more palaver, then, I drank to Miss Ormsby.'

'Which?' asked Robert, lifting his glass.

'Clara!'

'Hear, hear!' the gentlemen all replied.

'The White Camellia,' said Nelly, demurely sipping her wine.

'As ladylike a girl as any in Pedlington,' remarked Mr. Browne, graciously. For still the stout old Briton held his ground.

'Proud of your approval, sir,' said Frank, again in quite a Christmas humour. 'Now for it, mamma!'

Mrs. Browne, like Nelly, showed a pretty little indisposition to confess, but at last said, in a low, clear voice, and with a pitiful face, 'I fear it may not be right. But you know it was the first glass of wine I drank since God took him. And I pledged our dear boy who is no longer on earth.'

Perhaps the good lady attributed so much of sadness and constraint as she saw in her husband's face to some recollection of this trial. As she spoke the memory of all went back to last Christmas Day, when Mrs. Browne had refused her annual glass of wine; and back from that to a sadder day in the autumn of that year, when the news arrived that Death had laid his silent finger upon a son of their house while a stranger in a foreign land. But they soon rallied. Fifteen months will heal most domestic wounds. The bounteous Hours overlay old ruins with so many gracious growths of moss and herb and

floweret. Or else the envious Hours, sullen at our old regrets, encumber their relics with new waste and loss and ruin, so that grief is swallowed up in grief, and the old regrets have lost their power to move us.

'I am sure Mr. Key would not think it wrong, mamma,' urged Nelly. 'He invokes the saints, you know; and I think he prays to the Virgin Mary.'

'Fie, fie, my dear!' said Mrs. Browne, holding up an admonitory finger. She was surprised to see no displeasure on the pale distraught face opposite to her, removed as it was by the whole length of the table, yet never absent from her tender observation.

Here Frank drawled out, as he cracked a filbert, 'It would be rather good to tell old Marmaduke that mamma was penitent, and wanted absolution.' And the presumably horror-struck face of that minister presented itself to the imagination of his hearers, thus reviving their merriment.

Blanche next in her turn naturally said that she had pledged her absent husband, George Baily. And Robert, who happened at that moment to look toward his father, saw such an expression of pain on his countenance that he forgot all the funny things he was about to say. But attributing his father's emotion to the memory of the lost, and hoping to rouse him, he rallied, and resolved to drive dull care away.

Rising, and winking at Albert, he began: 'I am no orator, as Brutus is. Nor' (turning to Frank) 'have my manners Antinous's easy sway. I may have loved in days of yore, and may not. Heroes are but men——'

'Oh, oh!' from Frank and Albert. Scornful laughter from the girls.

'As Frank justly observes, however, I have already alluded to those attachments which were early lodged against my account in the bank of love.'

'Bravo!' cried Frank, generously forgiving the marauder for having overlooked his *engrossing* pun.

'Since which period of juvenile misfortunes,' continued Robert, 'the insolence of Jacks-in-office, and "the spurns that patient merit of the unworthy takes" have nearly driven the weary veteran to "his quietus make with a bare bodkin."'

'Shakespeare; Hamlet's soliloquy!' Albert gravely explained, proud of his acquaintance with the Elizabethan poets.

Then the Robber, with a quaint grin at Albert, resumed:

'The Sun of Kurrachee, however' ('Oh! oh! Hear!'), 'that fiery luminary which floored me in the land of Vishnu, scorched the soldier's brain, but left his affections untouched. And as a burned child dreads the fire, so a wounded heart shuns the wiles of alien sirens. Janet, my sympathetic, gentle sister, is now enthroned where Sophonisba or one of the other two nameless ones wields the sceptre over Albert. No rival shall displace my peerless Janet.' ('Em—'em! from that young lady.) 'But of friends and brothers in arms, men formidable in the battle-field, unwearied in a campaign, but in peace quiet, gentlemanly men——'

'So I should say,' Frank interposed.

'Quiet, gentlemanly men, of rather sedentary habits than otherwise——'

'Van John and écarté,' Frank suggested.

'Of rather sedentary and literary habits—of such friends I have a goodly company, whose

absence from this paternal mahogany I deplore. These I pledged in the ancestral port, and also that little remnant of my humbler fellow-countrymen, the rank and file of the gallant —th who survive the foeman's spear and the fiery darts of Phœbus.'

'Quite a Marc Antony,' said Frank approvingly, as the warrior, sitting down, turned to his neighbour, and said, 'Now for your secret, my Queen of Hearts.'

Janet made a little movement as if about to speak; then, catching a look of triumph in Joan's eye, changed her mind suddenly, and said, 'I *won't* tell.'

Her nature and habit, though not confiding, were utterly truthful. In a difficulty evasion never occurred to her mind. And it was by reckoning on her straightforward habit that Joan had calculated on dragging her secret to light.

'Come, my dear!' said mamma, encouraging her.

'Let pussy's head peep out,' said Mr. Browne kindly, and looking at her with unusual interest. 'Let pussy's head peep out. What colour is it?'

Looking at her father, she was struck with the earnest, anxious gaze he was directing toward her. She really wished to speak out candidly; but Sister's hard, cold eye, and clouds of chaff or exposition darkening the prospect, drove her within herself. Again she said, 'No; I *won't* tell.'

'It's my turn now,' blurted out Hubert. 'And if a girl doesn't like to tell who she is thinking about, I don't see why she should be bullied. But I'll tell you all who I drank to: Mr. Lane, the jolliest fellow I ever knew, and best friend I ever had. And if you'll pass the decanter, sir, I'll give him another bumper.'

At this point Janet's hand

slipped under the table, and catching Hubert's as he sat down, squeezed it with ecstasy.

'Take another yourself, I suppose you mean,' replied papa. The good man was holding out vigorously, for his wife's and children's sake, and perhaps also in courtesy to his guest. 'But the bottle goes round the other way, my boy.'

'The Black Tulip,' said Nelly, sipping her wine. We have before mentioned the quaint love of contrast which induced her to confer this title upon Mr. Lane.

'I should not call Mr. Lane exactly "a jolly fellow," Hubert,' said his mother; 'although your regard for him does you credit.'

'But he is a jolly fellow,' urged Hubert. 'He taught me to row properly and to swim. I should never have won that medal but for him. And you should see the boys' faces up at his class! Instead of looking cowed and stupid, as we used to do with Doctor Oldham, they all look as jolly as sand-boys.'

'Ahem,' Albert argued, 'may I inquire whether hilariousness (if there is such a word; and I beg Hubert to observe that I have no desire to carp, but that I ask for information, not being myself a scholar of profound erudition)—is hilariousness *particularly* conducive to scholarship?'

'I don't know,' Hubert replied. 'Pulling a long face over a sum won't make the answer come right. I know *that*.'

'No,' said Albert, smiling with an air of absolute conviction; 'no: certainly *not*.'

But as the question hovered about the domain of social ethics, Frank was moved to assert himself and maintain his autocracy. 'I have a great regard for Lane myself,' he said—'a very great regard. Indeed, I asked him to

dine here to-day.' (Janet furtively started.) 'But his constitution seemed to require a severe course of fasting and psalm-singing, and he is gone up to what they call "A Retreat," at the house of a parson in London. And with all due respect to Hubert's mature judgment and penetration, I think Lane is, like most religious men, of rather a melancholy turn, and as proud as Lucifer.'

The revelation of Mr. Lane's proceedings and the profundity of Frank's observations induced a pensive pause, after which the Robber said, 'Not being posted in the biography of Lucifer, my son Berty, you may consider yourself shut up by the family oracle. Then Mr. Browne, turning to the lady on his left, said, with forced gaiety,

'Last, but not by any means least: what absent friend held the place of honour in Miss Lyte's regard?'

It now appeared that an unmarried lady of maturer years than Janet or Nelly might feel embarrassed at such a question. Miss Lyte visibly hesitated, and manifested distress. Then looking round the table with an appealing glance, but avoiding Mr. Browne's eye, she said, 'It may be well in the end, though it is very painful to me to speak plainly now. And I beg you all to remember that "charity covereth a multitude of sins." A silence fraught with wonder fell upon them all. Then the lady went on: 'Unlike Albert, who has so many relatives, and so few friends, you must remember that, while I have many kind and excellent friends (among whom I hope *always* to reckon all of you), I have only one relative living; and I not unnaturally drank to my absent nephew, Bedford Lyte.'

The pallor of Mr. Browne's countenance became absolutely livid.

Mrs. Browne stared at him, and quaked with fear. Blanche flushed with anger. Nelly pouted, and turned her glass upside down in her plate. The young men preserved an ominous silence.

The hostess, after a few moments' unavailing terror, caught her guest's eye, rose, and the ladies quitted the room.

Albert bowed them out with stately ceremony, closed the door noiselessly, and returned daintily to his chair. But no sooner was he seated than Mr. Browne, with his most artificial smile, made them a silent bow, and also left the room.

'By Jove!' said Robert, 'I thought the poor old dad would have had another fit. How suddenly she unmasked her guns! Berty, my boy, cut up and see whether the governor's in the drawing-room, and bring us word what's going on.'

Hubert withdrew.

'What *can* be her game?' the Robber inquired of Frank.

'Game?' repeated Frank savagely, and with a furious gesture. 'Game? Why, to fetch this scamp back from the Antipodes, make a will in his favour, and set some speculating attorney on to contest Captain Lyte's. A pretty fellow to cram down all our throats on a Christmas Day! I wish Balbry had killed the d——d rascal!'

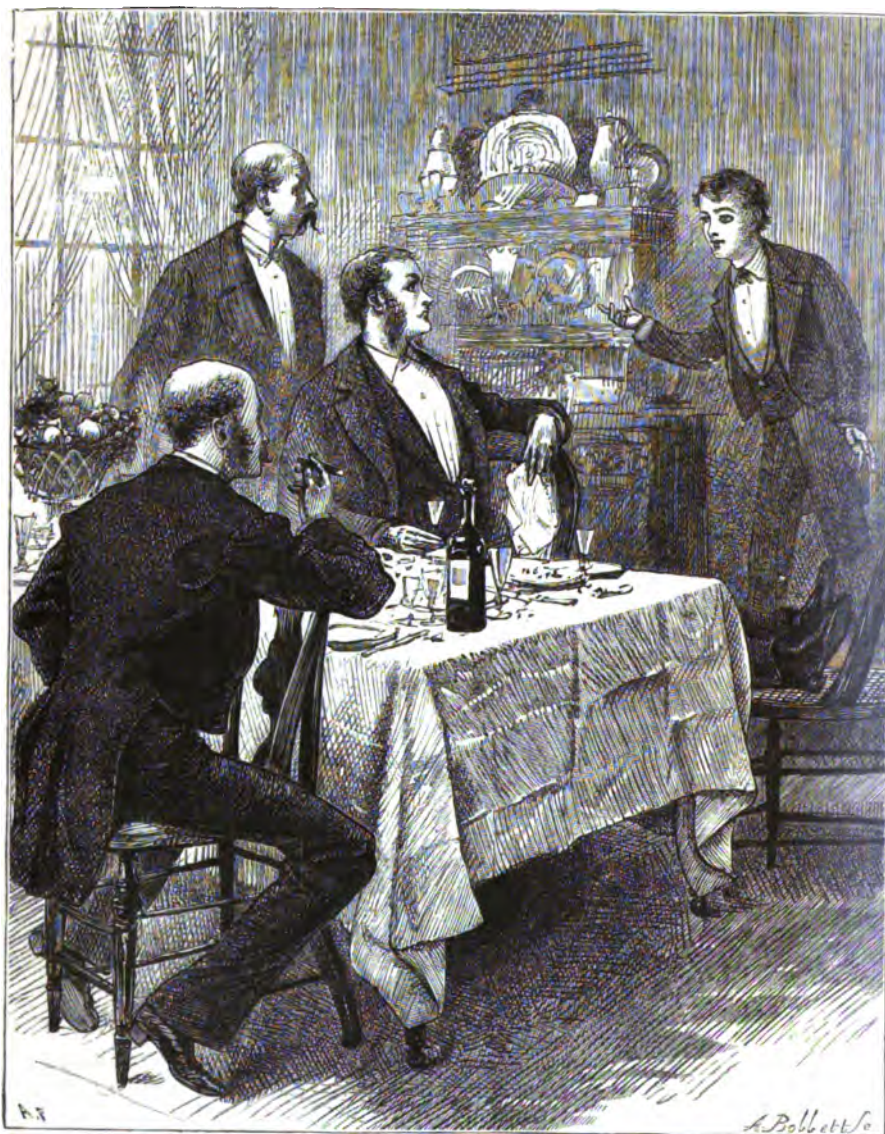
Now Albert felt some inexplicable desire to take this prodigal's part. 'Perhaps,' he timidly suggested—'perhaps Miss Lyte may be of opinion that her nephew has already suffered enough, in loss of fortune and reputation, for his share in a certain deplorable transaction.'

'Serve him right,' retorted Frank. 'His *share*, indeed!'

'And you will allow me to observe, Frank,' Albert continued, waxing warm with his subject,

'that possibly—mind, I decline to say more than possibly—the lady may have been partially to blame.'

roused by opposition. 'I am not aware that any member of this family ever saw Bedford Lyte, or had any reason to thin



'Shame! shame!' shouted the Robber, more than half in fun, and hoping to provoke a quarrel between Albert and Frank.

'Excuse me, Robert,' replied Albert,

ill of him until that catastrophe happened. He bore an excellent repute at Harrow. The contest between Baily and him was a fair issue, fought openly before the whole

school; and no doubt Bailly tried to thrash him, though he unfortunately failed. So far we cannot fairly condemn Lyte. But we all did see the young lady. We know that her home was distasteful to her; and we may have noticed a certain ease in her manner with gentlemen.'

Frank now broke in angrily. 'This is what I call a mean, cowardly attack,' he said; 'trying to take-away the character of a beautiful and innocent girl, as Miss Bailly certainly was.'

'I beg your pardon, Frank,' rejoined the elder. 'I only wish to hold the balance evenly between two persons. Wrong there was. Why should we put it all into one scale? Do we know anything for certain?'

'No one ever denied that that fellow seduced and deserted her,' said Frank.

'Nor do I positively deny it,' said Albert. But I think, Frank, that, as a partner in a legal firm of some standing, *you* might hesitate to condemn a man without positive evidence. And this I *will* say, while we are discussing a subject painful to us all: I should be very sorry for a sister of mine to be as easy in her manner with gentlemen as Miss Bailly was.'

'Hear! hear!' cried the marauder, thundering on the table with his knuckles, and making all the glasses jingle. 'A most outrageous little flirt she was!'

Albert had already said more than he wished to say, though, on mature reflection during the last few weeks, he had concluded that Bedford Lyte had been served with scanty justice, and that there remained another version of the old,

sad story, which it would be well for all persons concerned to hear. From first to last it had been taken for granted that the absent man was chargeable with Miss Bailly's ruin. He had suffered severely in consequence, though the *à priori* evidence was against the general verdict. The Baillys, father and son, had maintained an impenetrable reserve on the subject. Nor had Lady Balbry, the mother of the unfortunate baronet, spoken, though, by proving Lyte's guilt, she might have cleared her son's reputation; and the Baillys might in the same way have justified the severity of Captain Lyte's will. Presently Hubert returned, with a flushed countenance.

'Here's a go! Miss Lyte is telling them a fine cock-and-a-bull story upstairs; or else the story we have always believed is a pack of lies. She says, that *Bedford Lyte* never ran away with Eleanor at all; that Sir Thomas Balbry had more to do with her ruin than any one else. And she has shown them all a letter from Lady Balbry, which has made them believe every word she says.'

'Did you see it?' Robert asked.

'Yes; but I hadn't a chance of reading it. Blanche and Janet were poring over it together, and Blanche is as pale as a ghost.'

'Is the governor upstairs?' asked Frank.

'No,' Hubert replied. 'But the worst of it is, Janet vows she will give all her fortune to *that* Bedford Lyte as soon as she comes of age.'

'I'm *d*——*d* if she will!' said Frank, with considerable emphasis, and left the room, grinding his teeth.

(To be continued.)

THE RISE AND FALL OF OPÉRA BOUFFE.

THE time has almost come for considering the history of the startling, merry, gay, and reckless young entertainment known as *opéra bouffe*. It has enjoyed its moment, earned its money, won its admirers, sparkled, fizzed, and gone out like many another dramatic *feu d'artifice*. It has left behind it a train of unpleasant smoke, blackening the atmosphere which it illuminated and choking the voices which applauded. But its attractions from the first were ephemeral; and never could *opéra bouffe* have obtained so much notoriety on a foreign soil had it not been introduced at a time when the dramatic tastes of the country were in an uncertain and unsettled state. There was something English, characteristic, and defined in the burlesque, which made way for the curious growth transplanted from a Parisian soil. Burlesque only died when humour gave way to careless nonsense, and when money poured in so fast that authors did not care to take pains to be simply funny. Burlesque was not driven away because artists were less capable, or dancers less skilled, or merry music too difficult to be obtained; but because the humour which was apparent in the old burlesques ceased to exist, and the public began to see that the authors were laughing at them, instead of their laughing at the authors. In the history of the rise and fall of burlesque, the names of the Broughs, Talfourd, Byron, and Burnand must ever be held in conspicuous respect; and though, before the decline, many of us have assisted at sorry spectacles, we are none of us likely to forget those genuine and hearty humorists who for years supplied

the Olympic, Strand, and Royalty theatres with cheery, genuine, and inoffensive amusements. The public which remembered Robson and James Rogers, David James and Thorne, Terry and Dewar, John Clarke and Toole, Miss Wyndham, Marie Wilton, Fanny Josephs, Louise Keeley, and Mrs. Mellon, did not resign burlesque without a sigh; but such artists as these reigned in days before nonsense-songs and gibberish ballads, and flourished at a time when old English melody and epigrammatic neatness of verse were preferred to the vulgarity of the music hall and the extravagance of the modern negro serenader. At no time, however, was the entertainment known as *opéra bouffe* identified with English art or English taste. It was Parisian and anti-English to the backbone. We took it up because our own humour was not pronounced, and because we were swayed and influenced by the siren voices of the light French melodists. We could hear nothing but the music, and, for the sake of the music, we either refused to listen to the words or cheerfully forgave the uncongenial humour of the French libretti. 'Orpheus' and 'The Grand Duchess,' the 'Beautiful Helen' and 'Blue Beard,' the 'Little Faust' and 'Chilpéric'—we welcomed them all for their captivating melodies or feverish dances; and the madness, in time, became so violent, that there were some who advocated the introduction of the 'Timbale d'Argent,' and 'Héloïse and Abelard'—two of the most scandalous operas that ever disgraced the stage of a civilized country. In a few short years, *opéra bouffe* has risen, flourished, and declined in England.

A stage which prided itself, somewhat puritanically and ostentatiously, on its purity, has been handed over to 'cancan' dancers and feeble imitators of the poor paid creatures who kick up their heels at Mabilles and Ballier's; enormous sums of money have been expended on scenery which had no definite object, and on dresses for many who used the stage as an advertisement; and the playgoers of the metropolis have stared aghast at speculations which must have been as disastrous as the failure of the performers was complete.

It may sound paradoxical to state—but it is none the less true—that the first and best performances of opéra bouffe were given in this country at a place where theatrical entertainments were not permitted and the true spirit of the amusement could not be attempted. The first notes of Offenbach fell on the English ear in the Oxford Music Hall and at the Canterbury Hall. Those really pleasant selections from the little operetta called '66,' the carefully-chosen *pot-pourris* from the 'Orphée aux Enfers' and other Offenbachian operas, cannot have been forgotten. Long before Offenbach was seen in a regular theatre, Miss Russell was enchanting us with the rich notes of her luscious voice; Mr. St. Aubyn was taking the tenor music with great skill; Mr. Green was showing a rare fund of sly humour, in addition to the possession of a fine bass voice; and a lady, afterwards known as Miss Soldene, was gradually forcing her talent into notice. A sound and genuine entertainment is sure to attract attention wherever it is given. Playgoers and music lovers soon began talking of the operatic selections at the 'Oxford.' Miss Russell and Miss Fitz-Henry were fêted and applauded like prima

donnas; anxious and appreciative eyes watched Mr. St. Aubyn and the famous Mr. Green into the broughams which were to convey them and their conductor, Mr. Jonghman, to some far-distant place of amusement; and the wonderful song about 'Le Savetier et le Financier' was whistled all over London.

The accident of the Paris Exhibition gave the first impetus to the taste for opéra bouffe in this country. At that time Schneider was in her glory, and crowned heads were struggling to see the diamonds and applaud the cleverness of 'La Grande Duchesse de Gerolstein.' Where the world went, there, of course, the English folks were found; and those who were unable to be present in Paris besought their friends to bring home a score of the popular opera. Once started, the fever spread rapidly. Journeys to Paris became more popular after the Exhibition, and each one who came back home again was laden with the treasures of Offenbach or Hervé. Photographs of the burlesque actresses of Paris, songs, scores, and dances poured in upon us, and there was no dance in the Season or at Christmas time that we did not find ourselves jiggling to the irresistible French composers of the hour. And who do you think was the first author, or among the first, who offered his arm to the young lady whose beauty was so soon destined to fade? Who was the gallant cavalier who escorted Mdlle. Opéra-Bouffe on the English stage? None other than Jas. Robinson Planché, the charming story-teller of our childhood, whose 'Island of Jewels,' 'King of the Peacocks,' and 'King Charming' linger on the memory with a clearness and a fascination which no time nor circumstances can efface. It was Mr. Planché who, after a nine years' absence

from the stage which he had so conspicuously adorned, returned to see what his cunning hand and faultless taste could do with the French book of the 'Orphée aux Enfers,' to which Offenbach had set the score, which is still among the most popular which has ever proceeded from his pen. I prefer to give the story of Mr. Planché's connection with Offenbach in his own words:—"In September this year (1865) I was applied to by Mr. Buckstone to adapt for him Offenbach's opéra bouffe "*Orphée aux Enfers*," with a view to the first appearance at the Haymarket of Miss Louise Keeley, who he promised should be adequately supported by vocalists he would engage expressly for the piece, there not being one in the company who professed to sing operatic music. It was necessary, also, that Orpheus should play the violin, and there were other difficulties to be got over. The good intentions of Mr. Buckstone, however, only went the way of cartloads of similar materials, to pave the regions we were about to lay the scene of in the Haymarket, and failed to induce any singers of celebrity to set their feet on them. I was so accustomed, however, to this sort of disappointment in an English theatre, that it did not much disconcert me. I wrote the piece as well as I could, and got it acted as well as I could; William Farren, who had received a musical education, making a pleasant Jupiter, Mrs. Chippendale a splendid jealous Juno, Miss Helen Howard representing Public Opinion in a style calculated to obtain its favourite verdict, and an old favourite and true artist, Mr. David Fisher, playing Orpheus with intelligence and "the fiddle like an angel." Miss Louise Keeley was a charming Eurydice, and sang like a nightingale; so, with the addi-

tion of pretty scenery, pretty dresses, and some pretty faces, we pulled through pretty well. It was not Offenbach's opera, but the piece went merrily with the audience, and ran from Christmas to Easter. As far as I was concerned, the press was most laudatory, and welcomed my appearance as a writer of extravaganza, after a lapse of nine years, with a cordiality that was extremely gratifying to me, considering the change that in the meanwhile had come over the spirit of that class of entertainment.'

It had been well for our stage if authors of Mr. Planché's eminence, and artists with such faultless taste and welcome expression as Miss Louise Keeley, had continued their services. The one could write and the other could sing—gifts which in these latter days have not always been considered absolutely essential.

The great difficulty which English managers have experienced in dealing with or transplanting Parisian *bouffe* operas has been connected with the framework or idea of the composition. They were glad enough to take the music and the dances. No harm could possibly come out of them, save hindering musical taste and education—a subject which did not vastly concern English theatrical managers. That which was constantly heard in ball-rooms and at dinner parties, the melodies which were chosen by the bands of the Guards and in all garrison towns, could well be reproduced on the stage. But the idea or motive of Parisian opéra bouffe must have puzzled many an experienced manager. Had any author come forward to write original, or at any rate decent, books to the popular music, he would assuredly have made his fortune. All the managers wanted was somebody who could fit the

music with a funny and clever book. What they could get was the clever and facile gentleman who could write elegant lyrics and skate gingerly over very thin ice. What they wanted was some one who could construct a new edifice altogether for the music, which was sure to take on its own merits. No one can deny the excellent humour of such travesties as the 'Orphée aux Enfers' and the 'Belle Hélène.' But it was humour which did not suit us in the least. It was as out of place and awkward as those English tumblers pretending to dance what they are pleased to call the 'cancan' on the stage of a London theatre. Paris life is altogether different from London life. Over there we enjoy claret, the eleven o'clock breakfast—we fall into the manners and customs of the place. We feel lazy, we like lounging, and we are caught sitting outside the Café Reale taking a glass of absinthe and a cigarette before dinner. We say to ourselves there is nothing like the Parisian life. We vow that we will commence dinner at home with sardines and radishes; but the very instant the train arrives at Charing Cross we call for a glass of stout, and hurry off to Simpson's for a cut off the joint and a taste of English mutton. French humour of this pattern does not suit our climate or our constitution, and all the attempts hitherto made to reproduce these stories have resulted in comparative failure. We do not like or appreciate the 'motive' which runs through these stories, and we should be far more indignant at them if we took the trouble to ascertain what they were about. As a rule, English audiences do not take the trouble to make any inquiries about the tale which is being recited. How many playgoers could say what the Grand Duchess experienced, or

could accurately detail the sorrows or the fortunes of Madame Angot's daughter? Audiences, as a rule, care next to nothing about the story of operas. They go to the 'Huguenots,' the 'Sonnambula,' 'Don Giovanni,' 'Lucrezia Borgia,' and the rest of them, without troubling their heads about the book, or even studying the argument. They want to listen to the music, and no more. It is needless to say that the English adaptors take pains to suppress as far as possible the very points which are prominently brought forward in France. If this were not so, it is impossible that young girls could be permitted to sit out an average opéra-bouffe performance. In France they never go to such entertainments, and yet we pride ourselves on our excessive virtue. For the indelicate key which runs through all these entertainments is pretty much the same on all occasions. It is repeated *ad nauseam*. The Grand Duchess falls in love with a stalwart soldier in her army, and begins pawing him about. For the sake of the flattery of the Grand Duchess, Fritz deserts poor Wanda. The Greek nabob and governor of a province casts his eyes upon La Perichole, and straightway the pretty gipsy girl deserts her husband and her child for the sake of illicit gain. An Island of Bachelors is in existence in the middle of the ocean, and behold, the governor, the sub-governor, and all the inhabitants are in a frantic state of excitement at the announcement of the arrival of a ship whose cargo is a hundred virgins. Clairette jilts a humble barber for Ange Pitou, and straightway her friend and school-fellow, Mdlle. Lange, makes frantic and indelicate love to poor Clairette's lover. Bashful youths run away from their tutors, and are found to be debauched young

ruffians before their beards have grown.

Tickled with the success of these risky positions and daring situations, over which the Frenchmen (not the Frenchwomen, for they are not there) lick their lips, the authors go still farther, and in the 'Timbale d'Argent' and 'Héloïse et Abelard' tell stories which would not be tolerated after dinner in any mixed society of English gentlemen. The humour which cannot be related to ladies is useless in England, where, happily, ladies attend theatres without question; and so the books of the English versions of French opéras bouffes have been found tedious, after a careful process of Bowdlerism. Failing a good funny story, success has had to be obtained by the trick, or gag, or clever business of an actor or actors. The 'Princesse de Trébizonde' was made popular by Mr. Toole's 'gags' ('Keep your eye on your father!') and his admirable business. These things told more than the charming hunting chorus, or the winning duet, 'Ah! se ne tente pas,' or the chorus of pages, a lovely number. 'Genevieve de Brabant' will be remembered more for the duet of gendarmes than for any story or singing.

It was from the first useless to attempt to reproduce the spirit of these entertainments, which was found so popular in Paris. The only thing that ever could be done to add attraction to the welcome music is now being done, and has been done for some time past, by Mr. H. B. Farnie. It is true that this author is unable to build a play for himself, or to compose an original story; but he does the next best thing. He takes a good French farce, and amalgamates it pleasantly with the popular and charming music. There is very little harm in this, if it is cleverly carried out. The best English

farces have a French origin, and a distinct French origin. Our old friend 'Box and Cox' is a combination of 'Frisette' and 'Une Chambrea Deux Lits,' 'Woodcock's Little Game' is a French play, and so is the 'Spitalfields Weaver' ('Bruns le Fileur'). If to a really merry French farce, which is capable of being turned to an English account, the best and sweetest available music can be added, the public is decidedly the gainer.

'Nemesis,' at the Strand, and subsequent plays, prove sufficiently that Mr. Farnie's plan is a correct one. His musical selection is excellent; and though it may be urged that original plays would be preferable, and collaboration perhaps desirable, still the original plays are not forthcoming, and collaboration is still distasteful to English authors. The 'comedy-bouffe' principle is at any rate a long step in the direction of getting good musical farces and original musical burlesques. We may yet hope for a revival of the old English burletta, and of plays like 'The Turnpike Gate,' where poetry, lyrics, and pretty music were pleasantly combined. When we turn over the leaves of our mother's old music books we shall find that some of the most popular old English airs were first written for the stage. If we cannot start a comic opera of our own, we at any rate revive some taste for English songs and ballads. The time may be far distant, but if opéra bouffe has indirectly started a taste for dramatic music, many of its sins may cheerfully be forgiven.

A popular writer has already pointed out that we possess in England the nucleus of an excellent school of *bouffe* artists. No one can deny it. The artists who can sing and act, who are witty and bright, who have received a musical education and understand

the art of expression could support excellently one, and, at the most, two theatres. The forced enthusiasm for opéra bouffe, under any circumstances, under any conditions, with or without musical talent, education, or taste, must be ascribed to other reasons, which I shall propose to discuss presently. It is notorious, at any rate, that, as a rule, the English idea of theatrical management resembles the conduct of children over their toys. If one has a doll, the other must have a doll. If one is presented with a puzzle, the other refuses to be amused with a Noah's Ark. Sex, condition, circumstances, and age are immaterial. All must be alike. Thus, opéra bouffe, successful at one house, is instantly imitated at another. Shakespeare is played under certain conditions at one theatre: it is put up at another regardless of conditions. Directly the 'School for Scandal' is discovered to have some vitality, the 'School for Scandal' and the old comedies are played and revived all over London. If a new author makes a mark—always under certain conditions—he is instantly overwhelmed with orders for a comedy, a drama, a melodrama, a burlesque, or a contest for a hippodrome! He is the man of the moment, and he must be worked and ruined. There is some art required in cutting a coat or making a cabinet, but the manager's art appears to be ordering a play from a successful author, taking up the craze of the hour, and gambling recklessly for a success, which may turn up precisely the reverse.

The manager who can conscientiously make up more than two good opéra-bouffe companies out of the present available talent must indeed be a very sanguine

person. Voices are an inheritance and not the result of manufacture. We cannot order young tenors and ladies who can sing in tune like lengths of muslin for the ballet or paint-pots for the scenic artists, and to put up such entertainments without the talent is to tempt the indulgence of a far too lenient public. I am perfectly aware of the many instances of individual talent. If Miss Louise Keeley, with her voice and knowledge of the rare art of singing, which is a very different thing, had remained on the stage, she would have been worth her weight in gold at these times. I can heartily appreciate the art of Miss Julia Matthews, the grace of Miss Lydia Thompson, the singing of Miss Loseby. I don't believe Peschard herself ever expressed a song much better than Miss Soldene did 'Sleep on! sleep on! my Queen,' when she was in good voice, in the original Genevieve days at the Philharmonic, and no Planché tunes at the Lyceum, or any extravaganza acting that I ever had the honour of seeing, ever came up to the vocal and acting art of Miss Soldene and Miss Dolaro in the second act of 'Fleur de Lys.' Judic and Peschard could not have played this scene better. It was a triumph of unexaggerated expression. With such artists as these, and the addition of ladies like Madame Rita, excellent work might be done; but the talent is scattered instead of being concentrated. One or even two swallows do not make a summer.

The showiness and attractiveness of opéra bouffe have worked its downfall and caused the scandals which have been deplored. If we were more artistic it would not have been so. Opéra bouffe has the sad advantage of necessitating pretty and occasionally

scanty dresses. Women are not proof against such advantages, and many who would not have dreamed of study for the stage are content to appear and show themselves off upon it. Study is required for the education of an artist; money is alone required for the embarkation of a 'popular actress.' The money is always forthcoming. An artist who desired to found a comedy school, or encourage the dramatic fine art, might whistle for a capitalist. But Miss Rosie de Vere can have as many thousands as she likes. The public will be told that Miss Rosie de Vere can sing and act, and the public will gradually believe it. First, she will be admired for her taste in dress. It has been done for her by a milliner. Then, after hard struggles and practice she will battle with a song. How she has improved! Why she could not speak her native English the other day! She can aspire and can sing in tune. What art! what cleverness! Rosie de Vere thus becomes one of the 'popular actresses' of the day. Her picture is in the shop-windows. Ten to one she becomes a manageress, and the poor artists who have worked bravely all their lives are driven away into the country and must hide their diminished heads!

There are a thousand advantages in opéra bouffe, many of them very dear to the manager. A large staff of ladies is necessary. It is not impossible that each lady possesses, or can acquire, a little capital. It is all grist to the mill. Never mind if they can sing or not, talk or not, speak or not, dance or not, move or not. Miss Polonaise of the establishment will fit them with nice dresses. They will come on in a crowd, and the critics will say that the piece is beautifully

mounted and bright with pretty faces. They will all drive to the photographer; they will all appear as 'popular actresses,' and when the money is exhausted the theatre will pass to other hands, to fresh capitalists, and new favourites.

It is of this form of opéra bouffe that I think the public is getting a little tired. The first night is very enchanting; the bouquets are of the best and dearest; the accounts in the papers are apparently very flattering; the preparatory dinner was a great success. All goes well until the capital is exhausted and the candle burns down to the socket. But the spectacle is no more edifying than the scene in Hogarth's picture.

The evil has happily worked its own cure, or there is, at any rate, a tendency and disposition for better things. In other countries, where they more keenly appreciate art, it is possible that audiences might have resented some of the recent impertinences which have alike distressed all who take an interest in the stage and those good artists and true who have remained faithful to the ship. It is within the bounds of probability, that if an opera had been played elsewhere with scarcely one number throughout the performance being sung in tune, and with scarcely one on the stage with the faintest notion of acting, some more decided verdict would have been given than satirical applause. It is better perhaps, however, that a silent and expressed condemnation has been registered. Disturbances of all kinds are unseemly and to be avoided, and it is in the nature of men to be argumentative and cantankerous when such things happen. However sound an opinion may be, there is always

some one found who is disposed to argue on the other side.

However, when 'night is darkest dawn is nearest,' and with the decline of opéra bouffe in its English dress may be reasonably ex-

pected a recall of the banished artists, an impetus in the direction of faithful and honest work, and an overthrow of the monopoly of bad taste.

CLEMENT W. SCOTT.



BOXING NIGHT.

F O G.

DAMP fog o'er the city is creeping,
 Yellow with smoke and stain ;
 The very heavens are weeping,
 Methinks, in this mist-like rain.

Chill are the streets, and dismal,
 And dark and darker grows
 The air—till a gloom abysmal
 O'er all things seems to close.

E'en the goldsmiths' glittering cases
 In the shops seem blurr'd and dim,
 And one shudders at some of the faces
 One meets—they look so grim.

'Tis a fearful night, and the river
 Rolls a deeper flood, they say,
 Than the oldest waterman ever
 Saw rush on its seaward way ;

And on Waterloo Bridge here, sitting
 By the keeper's turning-stile,
 You may hear the fierce tide splitting
 Below 'gainst the granite pile.

What was that ?—a most rapid walker,
 Surely, and careless withal,
 And a curious muttering talker—
 Ugh ! this fog settles down like a pall !

And his face was wild and haggard—
 A face to set one to think—
 And he seemed as though he stagger'd—
 Stagger'd, but not with drink.

By Heaven ! he's here above us,
 On the parapet ! Haste thee, run,
 Keeper, or—Jesu love us !—
 A fearful deed will be done.

Too late ! See, his hands uplifting,
 With a shriek he disappears,
 And his body, whirling and drifting,
 And dash'd 'gainst the solid piers,

Perchance, all mangl'd and broken,
In foul ooze will be flung by the tide,
And a bitter word will be spoken—
' Another vile suicide !'

But, before harangue or stricture,
My lord or lady, I pray,
Turn a glance on this other picture—
Its like you may see any day.

• • • • •

This poor heap was a Spitalfields weaver,
Had wife and fair children five,
But the want-born poison of Fever,
Left him but one alive ;

And for weeks, from early morning,
He has sought for work in vain,
The detested workhouse scorning
None heard him greatly complain.

But to-day his last little daughter
Our Saviour was pleased to call,
And despair, as the fog on the water,
Settled down on his heart like a pall.

Then through this dark murky city
He fled from his cruel woes,
Ending them thus. Found he pity
From Heaven ? Heaven only knows.

J. W. T.



SPORTING ADVENTURES OF CHARLES CARRINGTON, ESQ.

By 'OLD CALABAR.'

READER, must I confess it? I am a Cockney, born and bred in the 'little village.' Though I passed some eight or ten years in a Government office, yet my heart was not in the work. I had often illnesses, which kept me away; those days—must I own it?—were generally spent in a punt at Weybridge with one of the Keens. At Walton or Halliford I was great in a Thames punt; and I then imagined few could hold a candle to me in a gudgeon or roach swim; that I was *the* fisherman of England, *par excellence*. I am wiser now.

At last my absences from office were so frequent that I had quiet intimation to go; but, having friends who were pretty high in office, I got an annuity in the shape of ninety pounds a year. A fresh berth was procured for me at four hundred per annum, where I had a good deal of running about. This suited me much better, as it enabled me to indulge in my proclivities. I now took to shooting, and rather gave fishing the go-by.

I believe I tormented every gun-maker in the West End to death. I was continually chopping and changing, inventing fresh heel-plates to the 'stocks.' I would have a thick one of horn for a thin coat, and a thin one of metal for a thick coat. Then I had them made with springs to diminish the recoil. I was laughed at by every one who knew anything about the matter; but I was so eaten up by self-conceit that I imagined no one was *au fait* at guns but myself, and would take

no advice. My shooting was not what a sportsman would call 'good form'; but this I did not believe.

'Dash it, Muster Carrington,' said an old Somersetshire farmer to me one day; 'always a-firing into the brown on 'em, and mizzing the lot. It can't be the gun, or because you wear gig-lamps. You're no shot, zur, and never will be;' but I laughed at the old fellow's ignorance. Rather rich that. I, with one of Grant's best guns, not a shot—rub-bish! But I determined I would make myself a shot; so I went over to Ireland to an old friend of mine, who lived in a wild, remote part of Galway. He was a first-class sportsman in every way; took great pains with me, and taught me a good deal. I learnt to ride to hounds with him, not well certainly, but in my vanity I soon imagined I not only rode, but shot better than my instructor. One day, after shooting at twenty-three snipes, and only killing one, and the next missing thirteen rabbits, turned out from the keeper's pockets, I was fain to admit I was not the shot I thought myself; so I betook myself back to London—a sadder, but not a wiser man. I then entered one of the pigeon clubs. Pigeon club? it was one. I won't say anything about that. If I had gone on with it I should soon have had pockets to let. I was terribly laughed at by every one, for I could neither shoot nor make anything by betting.

I then determined to try hunting, and wrote to my old friend in Ireland to procure me a couple of

horses. This he did, and sent me a couple of good ones. I enjoyed the hunting more than I did the shooting, because I could ride a little, and got on better.

Sending my horses down to the country one fine morning, the next I followed them to —, where I had taken a little box for the season. Many and oft were my mishaps during the few months I was there.

I was in the famous run I am about to relate, and one of the unfortunate victims who came to grief on that occasion.

In the county of Croppershire, and not far from the little post town of Craneford, a pack of foxhounds was kennelled: they were under the joint mastership of two gentlemen, Samuel Head, Esq., commonly called Soft Head, and Henry Over, Esq., who was usually designated Hi Over; the secretary was George Heels: he went by the name of Greasy Heels.

A local wag had nicknamed it the 'Head-over-heels Hunt'; but another aristocratic gentleman and a public-school man said that a much more *distingué* and appropriate title would be the classical one of the *Sternum-super-caput* Hunt. This it was ever afterwards called; and certainly no hunt deserved the name better, for hardly a man amongst the whole lot could ride; they were ever being *grassed*, or 'coming to grief.'

Men from the next county used to say to each other, 'Old fellow, I am in for a lark to-morrow. I'm going to see the "Sternum" dogs;' or, 'I am going to drive the ladies over next week, when the Sternum hounds meet at the cross-roads; they want a laugh, and to see a few falls.'

The huntsman to these hounds was John Slowman. He was not a brilliant huntsman, but he could ride; he had no voice; could not

blow the horn well, which was, perhaps, a lucky thing.

Somehow or other the Sternum hounds generally killed, and had a great many more noses nailed to their kennel-door than most of the neighbouring packs. The great secret of their success was that the hounds were *let alone*; they never looked for halloas or lifting, and if they did they very seldom got it. They were great lumbering, throaty, slack-loined, flat-sided animals; but they could hunt if let alone, and often carried a good head, and went along at a pretty good bat too; and as they had but few men who rode up to them, they were not as a rule pressed or over-ridden.

The Sternum gentlemen were great at roads, though now and then they would take it into their heads to ride like mad, especially when there was any one from a neighbouring hunt to watch their proceedings. Then there were riderless horses in all directions, for the country was a stiff one, and took a deal of doing.

'Ah, gentleman,' Slowman would exclaim, as the field came thundering up ten minutes after a fox had been broken up, 'you should have been here a little sooner; you should indeed. Mag—nificent from find to finish. Don't talk to me of the Dooks, or the Belvoir, or the Pytchley either, nor none of them hunts as have three packs to keep 'em agoing. Give me two days a week, and such a lot of dogs as these. I dessay the Markis will make a huntsman in time. Frank Gillard ain't a bad man, and Captain Anstruther is pretty tidy; but there's too much hol—lerin', too much horn, too much lifting and flashing over the line. They mobs their foxes to death; I kills mine.'

Slowman was magnificent at these times, and felt more than

gratified when compliments were showered on him on all sides.

'Right you are, Slowman.' 'You know how to do the trick, old fellow.' 'Best huntsman in Europe.' 'There's half-a-sovereign to drink my health.'

Then Slowman would collect his hounds, nod to the whips, and return home a proud and happy man.

The Sternum hounds hunted a week later than their neighbours, and at the two meets that took place during that period they generally had large fields, and always on the last day of the season, because Messrs. Head and Over gave a grand breakfast.

On the occasion I am about to speak of, the last day of the season, a breakfast was to be given of more than usual magnificence. The hounds had had a good season, and the masters determined that they would be even more lavish than usual.

Great were the preparations made when it was known that the neighbouring hunts were coming in force to see them, and have one more gallop before they put their beloved pinks away in lavender.

Slowman, the huntsman, the evening before the eventful day, had gone through the kennels, made his draft for the following morning, looked to the stables, and given orders about the horses and other little matters pertaining to his craft.

He was seated by his cosy fire, and in a cosy arm-chair, puffing meditatively at a churchwarden, and now and then taking a sip from a glass of hot gin-and-water that stood at his elbow. 'Bell's Life' was at his feet, and before the fire lay a couple of varmint-looking fox terriers. Slowman was thoroughly enjoying himself, and wondering if the six-acred

oak spinny which they were to draw first the next morning would hold a good stout fox.

'John,' said his wife, bustling into the room, 'Captain Martingail wishes to know if he can see you an instant: he is on his horse at the door.'

'Lord bless me, Mary! surely,' sticking his feet into his slippers and rushing to the front door. The Captain was a favourite of his. The gin he was drinking was a present to him from the Captain; the 'Bell's Life' was the Captain's. The Captain always came of a Sunday for a chat and look through the kennels; and the Captain was one of the very few of the hunt who could ride. He always gave Slowman a fiver at the end of the season, and many good tips besides; so he was a prime favourite with the huntsman.

'Good evening, good evening, Captain,' said Slowman, going to the door. 'Come in, sir. Here, Thomas—Bill—Jim—some of you come here and take the Captain's horse. Throw a couple of rugs over him and put him in the four-stall stable, take his bridle off, and give him a feed of corn.'

'Now, sir, come in,' as the Captain descended from his hack and gave it to one of the lads. 'I was just having a smoke, sir, and a glass of gin-and-water—your gin, sir; and good it is, too.'

'That's right, Slowman. And I don't care if I take one with you. It's devilish cold, but no frost. I want to have a talk with you about to-morrow.'

Taking the arm-chair, he mixed himself a glass of liquor, and lit a cigar.

'Slowman,' he commenced, 'there's the devil's own lot of people coming to-morrow. There's Jack Spraggon, from Lord Scamperdale's hunt. He's sent on

Daddy Longlegs, his Lordship's best horse, and another; so *he* means going. Jealous devil he is, too. Soapy Sponge will be here with Hercules and Multum in Parvo; old Jawleyford, and a host of others of that lot. Then there's Lord Wildrace, Sir Harry Clear-all, and God knows who besides. There's more than forty horses in Cransford now—every stall and stable engaged; and there will be twice as many in the morning.'

'Ah! sir, it's the breakfast as brings 'em—at least, a great many of 'em.'

'Well, I daresay that has something to do with it,' replied the Captain; 'but a great many come to have a laugh at us. The fact is, most of our men can't ride a d——. Then look at Head and Over, they are always coming to grief and falling off. No wonder they get laughed at. And most of the others, too. There will be no end of ladies out, too, and all to have a grin at us. Oh! by-the-way, Slowman, here is your tip. I may just as well give it to you to-night as later. I've made it ten instead of five this year, because you've shown us such prime sport.'

'Very much obliged to you, Captain, indeed,' thrusting the note into his pocket; 'and for your kind opinion too. I try to show what sport I can, and always will. So they're coming to have a laugh at us, are they! I wish we may find a good stout fox, and choke all the jealous beggars off. I'd give this ten-pound note to do it,' slapping his pocket.

'It may be done, Slowman,' replied the Captain cautiously; 'in fact, I may say I have done it. But you must back me up; and, mind, never a word.'

'I'm mum, sir. Mum as a gravestone.'

'Well, you see, Slowman, having found out what they are coming for, I've a pill for them. You draw the six-acre oak spinny first. Well, there will be a *drag* from that over the stiffest country to Bolton Mill. That's eight miles as the crow flies. There, under the lee of a hedge, will be old Towler with a fresh-caught fox from their own country. As he hears the hounds coming up he will let him loose. He's not one of your three-legged ones, but a fresh one, caught only this afternoon. I've seen him—such a trimmer! He'll lead them straight away for their own country. And if the strangers, and old Spraggon, and Jawleyford, and all the rest of them can see it through, they are better men than I take them to be. I shall have my second horse ready for me at the mill. And so had you better. I'll take the conceit out of the beggars.'

'By the living Harry!' exclaimed the huntsman, 'a grand idea. I must draft Conqueror, Madcap, and Rasselas. They are dead on drags. But, Captain, if the governors twig it?'

'Not a bit, Slowman. They, as you know, won't go four miles.'

'Yes, sir, yes. I know all that. But if they should twig? They have the coin, you know.' The huntsman had his eye to the main chance.

'But they will not, Slowman. Now, I will tell you a secret; but, mind, it's between ourselves. Honour, you know.'

'Honour bright, Captain,' replied the huntsman, laying his hand on his heart.

'Well, then, to-morrow at breakfast, Head and Over will announce their intention of resigning.'

'No, sir; you don't mean it?' said the huntsman hastily.

'I do,' replied the Captain.

'And I am going to take them on, and you too. I am to be your M.F.H. It's all cut and dried. So you see you run no risk. But not a word of this.'

The huntsman sat with his mouth open, and at last uttered, 'Dash my boots and tops, Captain, but you are a trimmer! But,' he continued, 'if we should find a fox before we come on the drag?'

'But you will not, Slowman. The cover is mine, and has been well hunted through to-day, and will be to-morrow morning again. No fox will be found there.'

The two sat for an hour and more talking and arranging matters, so that there might be no failure on the morrow. And all having been satisfactorily arranged, the Captain mounted his horse, and rode home.

The following morning—the last of the season—was all that could be desired. A grey day with a southerly breeze. It was mild for the time of year. Great were the preparations at Mr. Head's house. He gave the breakfast one year, Over the next. It was turn and turn about.

As it was the last breakfast he was to give as an M.F.H., Head determined it should be a good one. Mrs. Head was great before her massive silver tea set; and she had her daughter on her right to assist her.

At the time appointed Lord Wildrace, who had driven over in his mail phaeton, put in an appearance in his No. 1 pink, closely followed by Spraggon, who determined to have ample time for his breakfast. Then old Jawleyford entered, and rushing up to the lady, declared it was too bad of her not to have come over and seen them. At any rate, they would come and spend a week with them soon at Jawleyford Court, would they not?

Then Soapy Sponge turned up, looking as smart and spruce as ever.

We cannot go through the breakfast—or the speech of Mr. Head, and the other by Mr. Over, or the regrets of the company on their resigning the joint mastership, or the cheers on the announcement that Captain Martain-gail had consented to keep them on.

'Devilish good feed,' growled Jack Spraggon to Sponge, who was drawing on his buckskin gloves. Jack was a little elevated; for he had not spared the cherry-brandy or the milk punch.

'It was that,' replied his friend. 'Feel as if you could ride this morning, don't you?'

'Yes, I can—always do; but no chance of it with such dogs as these.'

'Don't know about that,' returned Sponge. 'They generally find, and kill too.'

Such a field had been rarely seen with the Sturnum hounds—horsemen, carriages, mounted ladies, all eager.

'Let the whips be with you, or rather at the outside of the cover, to keep the people back,' whispered Captain Martain-gail to the huntsman. 'I will go to the top of the cover when I give the view halloo. You know what to do.'

'Certain of a fox, I suppose, Martain-gail?' asked Lord Wildrace, as they were smoking their cigars close to the hounds, who were drawn up on a bit of greensward, giving the ten minutes' law for the late comers.

'It has never yet been drawn blank,' returned the Captain. 'Ah! there goes Slowman with the dogs. Time's up.'

Cigar-ends were now thrown away, girths tightened, stirrup-leathers shortened or let down.

The Captain stole into cover,

and then galloped away to the far end.

Presently a ringing tally-ho was heard.

'Found quickly,' growled Jack Spraggon, as he hustled along on Daddy Longlegs to get a good place.

'That's your sort, old cock!' ejaculated Sponge, as he dashed past him on Hercules, throwing a lot of mud on Jack's spectacles from his horse's hoofs.

'Oh, you unrighteous snob!—you rusty-booted Cockney!' exclaimed Spraggon, rubbing at his spectacles with the back of his gloved hand, thereby daubing the mud all over the glasses, and making it worse. 'Just like you, you docked-tail humbug!'

Too-too went Slowman's horn. 'Give 'em time, gentlemen!—give 'em time!' he screamed, as he took the wattled fence from the spinny into the fallow beyond. The hounds took up the drag at once, and raced away.

'Yonder he goes!' exclaimed the Captain, pointing with his whip to some imaginary object, and, digging the latchfords into his horse, was away.

The first fence was a flight of sheep-hurdles, stretching the whole way across a large turnip field. Here Jawleyford on his old cob came to grief, being sent flying right through his ears.

'Serve you right!' muttered Spraggon, as Daddy Longlegs took it in his stride. 'You would not do a bit of paper for me last week. May you lie there for a month!'

'Pick up the bits,' roared Sponge to him as he galloped past, 'and lay in a fresh stock of that famous port of yours.'

But the hounds were carrying too good a head for much chaff. The gentlemen of the Sternum hunt were riding like mad. Already horses began to sob; for the pace was

a rattler, and the country heavy. The celebrated Rushpool brook was before them—that brook that so many have plumbed the depth of. It wants a deal of doing.

Lord Wildrace charged it, so did Spraggon; but both were in. Sponge, on Hercules, flew over. Slowman and the Captain did it a little lower down. Head, Over, and a host of others galloped for a ford half a mile away.

Out of a large field only eight or ten cleared the Rushpool brook. His Lordship and Spraggon were soon out and going; and their horses having a fine turn of speed enabled them to come up with the hounds again; and their checking for a few minutes, in consequence of some sheep having stained the ground, let up the rest of the field on their now nearly beaten horses.

'Fastish thing, my Lord, is it not?' said Over to Lord Wildrace, who was mopping his head with a scarlet silk pocket-handkerchief.

'Yes,' said the nobleman, turning his horse's head to the wind, 'devilish sharp. I'm cold, too. I wish I could see my second horse. I'm pumped out.'

'Have a nip of brandy, Wildrace,' said Captain Martingail, offering his silver flask. 'Been in the water, I see—and a good many more, too,' casting his eyes on half a score of dripping objects. 'It's a very distressing jump to a horse, is that Rushpool brook. By gad, they have hit off again!'

Slowman knew well the line to cast his hounds, and they soon hit it off, and went racing away again, heads up and sterns down.

At last Bolton Mill was in sight, and here many got their second horses, the head grooms from the other hunt having followed the Captain's, and the joint masters' servants were there already.

Spraggon was quickly on the back of The Dandy; but he was

hardly up before a view halloo was given in a field below them, and a hat held up proclaimed their fox was ahead of them.

'It's all right, Slowman,' said Captain Martaingail, as the hounds feathered on the line and took it up.

'He's right away across the Torns,' shouted a keeper-looking man (this was Towler, who had shaken the fox out) as the field came up, 'an' a-going like blue murder.'

The hunting was now not quite so fast, but they got on better terms with their fox after a little, and settled well to him.

A good stout fox he was too, and deserved a better fate. He led them right into his own country, but before he could reach a friendly earth, seven or eight miles from where he was shook out, the hounds ran into him in the open.

Some eight or ten of the field were in at the finish, and others came up at intervals.

'Here, gentlemen,' exclaimed Slowman triumphantly, to the strangers from a distance, 'this is one of your foxes. I guess we sent him back to you faster a precious deal than ever you sent him to us. Sorry we've killed him, though, your dogs want blood, poor things. You've seen what the Sternum hounds can do now! we're not to be laughed at, are we?'

This impudent speech had not much effect generally, but several gentlemen turned away disgusted.

The run was quoted in every sporting paper; and it was years and years before people forgot the great Rushpool Brook run, the last of the season.

The hounds had achieved a reputation, and Captain Martaingail took care they should not lose it. He carried the horn him-

self after he took to them, Slowman acting as first whip; he drafted most of the hounds, and got together a fresh pack, that were not only good-looking, but could go too. But the dogs never lost the name of the '*Sternum-super-caput*' hounds.

Whilst I am on the subject of hunting, I may as well tell you another funny story which happened to a friend of mine; this took place near London, and although I did not come so badly off as my friend, yet I was nowhere at the finish.

It is of a thorough cockney that I am about to write; of one who made the City his home; did a little in Stocks and on 'Change: he had done so well on it that he had four hunters standing not a hundred miles from the Angel at Islington. Thither he used to go of an evening on the 'bus to his snug little chambers, to which was attached a capital stable with four loose boxes, and in these four boxes stood four decentish nags. I don't know that they were reliable fencers, but they could gallop; they were bang up to the mark—well done, well groomed, and well clothed.

Frank Cropper was proud of his horses, and his stud groom, Dick, was his right hand in all matters. Dick, though he professed to have a profound knowledge of horses, in reality knew nothing about them, and had to thank his strappers for the condition and fettle they were in.

But Dick was great at getting up leathers and top boots, was extremely fond of dress, turned out well, and though he could not ride a yard, led every one to believe he was invincible in the saddle.

He was grand when he used to

dodge about in the lanes after the Puddleton currant-jelly dogs, riding his master's second horse. Cropper thought it the correct thing to have out a second horse with the harriers. No one ever saw Cropper or his man take a fence; they used to gallop through places or fences that had been smashed by some one before them, or creep through gaps made in hedges.

Occasionally he used to honour the Queen's with his presence; there he did it in grand style, sent his horses down by rail, or drove down in his cart, with his brown-holland overalls on, covering his boots and spotless buckskins from the smallest particle of dust or dirt; these he would have taken off with a grand flourish just before the hounds moved away, and mounted his horse with the grandest possible air, telling Dick to ride to points, and to be sure to be handy with his second horse; but, somehow or other, he never got his second horse; Dick always mistook the line of country.

Once or twice Cropper had been known to grace the Epping Forest Hunt on an Easter Monday; but, somehow or other, Frank did not speak much of this: why, I know not.

'Dick,' said his master one morning as he sat at breakfast, 'the day after to-morrow is the last of the season—at least, the last day of any hounds I can get to; so I mean to have a turn with the —— staghounds.'

'Do you, sir? I wouldn't if I were you, sir; hate that calf-hunting. The Queen's ain't up to my ideas of huntin'; no staghounds are; but these hounds are duffers, the master's a duffer, the huntsman is a duffer, the whips are duffers, and so are the hounds. No, sir, be Cardinal

Wiseman, and go with the —— pack.'

'No, Dick, I have made up my mind to see these hounds; it's a certain find; open the door of the cart and out pops your stag. It's the last day of the season, and I mean to have a good gallop.'

'Very well, sir. You will go down by rail, I suppose?'

'Yes, Dick, yes; by rail. You will go on by the eight-o'clock train. I shall follow by the ten.'

'All right, sir.' And they separated, the man to look to his stable and things, the master to do a little on 'Change.

Frank Cropper went in for a good breakfast on the morning of the last of the season, took plenty of jumping powder in the shape of Kentish cherry brandy, and topped it up with some curaçoa.

'I feel,' says Cropper, as he got into the train, and was talking to some City friends who were bound on the same errand as himself; 'I feel, my boys, that I shall take the lead to-day, and keep it, too. Ha, ha! What do you think of that? A church would not stop me. Temple Bar I should take in my stride, if my horse could jump it. I'm chockful of go this morning; I shall distinguish myself.'

'Or extinguish yourself,' remarked one.

Cigars and an occasional nip at their pocket pistols whiled away the time till the train arrived at its destination; there, Cropper and another took a fly, and drove the three miles they had to go. They were quite determined they would not dirt their boots or spotless leathers by a three-miles' ride; they would appear at the meet as bright as their No. 1 pinks, Day and Martin, and Probert's paste could make them.

'There they are!' exclaimed

Cropper's friend, as he caught sight of the hounds drawn up on a small common. 'By Jupiter, but there's a lot out! it's the last day of the season.'

Cropper descended from the fly in all the glories of his Ulster coat and overalls; his horses were there under the charge of spicy-looking Master Dick.

The overalls were slipped off, and, with the Ulster, consigned to the driver to leave at the station; and our hero mounted his horse and was ready for the fray.

Now, this meet not being far from town, and a large number of the London division being present, the worthy master, having a proper regard for his hounds, thought a few jumps might choke off a good many who would press upon the hounds. So he had the deer uncarterd some three-quarters of a mile from where they were, the van containing him was backed not very far from a flight of sheep-hurdles, and a double line of foot people being formed, the door of the cart opened and out leapt the stag. Looking around him for an instant, he started away at a quick trot, and then, as the shouting became louder, commenced to canter, cleared the hurdles, and was away.

'Lot of these London cads down here to-day,' remarked young Lord Reckless to his friend Sir Henry Careful. 'Don't know, 'pon my soul, what they come here for.'

'For about the same reason you do—to see the hounds, and get a fall or two.'

'Ah, that's all very fine,' retorted his Lordship, 'for you to say so. You never ride at anything, therefore you are pretty safe. I ride at everything.'

'But never by any chance get over,' interrupted the baronet, 'except through your horse's ears.'

What more they said was cut short by the hounds coming up on the line of the stag, and racing away.

I got over the hurdles all right, and so did most of the field; but at the second fence I was down. And I saw Cropper unseated at the same instant, and his horse galloping wildly away at the third fence. Dick was shot through his horse's ears into the next field.

I was rushing about for mine, over my ankles in mud, when I encountered Frank Cropper and his man Dick in the middle of the slough.

'Where the deuce is my second horse?' roared Cropper to his servant. 'I thought I told you to ride him to points.'

'So I was going to, sir; but he stumbled, and unshipped me.'

'Good heavens! what is to be done?' exclaimed Cropper. 'I shall lose the run. Here, you fellows,' to a lot of countrymen about, 'catch the horses—half-a-crown each for them.'

But the nags were not so easily caught, and it was half an hour before they were secured. Both I and Cropper were wet and cold; so, leaving Dick to go on with the horses by train to London, and get the coats at the station, Cropper and I started on foot to walk there. He was too bruised and cold to ride; so was I.

You may suppose that the remarks we heard going along were not complimentary: 'Two gents in scarlet as has been throwed from their 'orses, and a-stumping of it home,' &c.

At last I was getting nearly beat, and so was my friend, when we espied a fly coming along the road. In it was seated Warner, of the Welsh Harp at Hendon. Taking pity on us, he gave us a lift, and drove us to the nearest station, and we reached London in due time.

This was the last of my hunting experiences. I got disgusted with it, and sold my horses. Having read flaming accounts from Cook's tourists, some of whom had been round the world in ninety days, I packed up my guns and some clothes, and started for America.

I did not remain long in New York, as I was anxious to commence shooting. So I was not long in getting to the small town of —, and, putting up at the best hotel the place afforded, which was not a very good one, sent for the landlord.

'Wall, Britisher, I'm glad to see you,' commenced the American Boniface, coolly seating himself on the table, and commencing spitting at a bluebottle fly on the floor. 'So you've come here to see our glorious American constitootion. Wall, I guess you'll be pretty considerable surprised—tarnation surprised, doggoned if you won't. We're an almighty nation, we air. Going a-shooting, air you? Wall, I calkerlate we've got more game hereabouts than would fill all London, and enough ships in our little river the Mississi-pi to tow your little island across the broad Atlantic—we hev, indeed, stranger. There's lots of grouse; but nary a buffeler, 'bar, nor alligator about here. Bnt I s'pose you means to take up yer fixins here in this feather-bed bully hotel afore you makes tracks?'

I assured him such was my intention.

'Wall, then, stranger, what will you like?—cocktail, mint julip, brandy smash, or cobbler? I've a few festive cusses in the bar as will tell you all about the shooting. Let's hev a licker-up with them.'

To this I assented, and walked into another room with him, where there were Yankees of all descriptions.

I determined to make myself popular, and stood drinks to any amount.

'Bust my gizzard, but you air a ripper!' exclaimed my tall friend. 'He air, ain't he, bully boys?'

What more they said was drowned in a terrific row which took place at the other end of the apartment.

'Hillo!' shouted my tall friend. 'Come on, stranger, if you want to see our pertikelur customs of this hemisphere. Bet my boots it's Bully Larkins and that old 'oss from Calerforney. Go it, my cockeys!' he screamed out as he mounted on a table, 'go it, old coon!' alluding to one of the combatants; 'go it! 'Billy's a-gaining on you, and if you don't look out he'll riz yer har with his bowie knife, gouge yer eye, and fetch you out of yer boots—he will, by —!'

Such a fearful row I never heard. All were in a state of frenzied excitement—knives glittered in the hands of many. Whilst all this was going on I made my way out of the apartment, and locked and bolted myself in my own.

In half an hour my landlord came to the door, and knocked for admission.

'It's all over, stranger,' he said as he entered. 'Old Calerforney carved two of Bully Larkins' fingers off with his bowie, and Larkins bit off half t'other's nose. I guess he ain't beautiful. They're festive cusses here, and air always at it. Nary a day passes without a free fight.'

I need hardly say the next day I took my departure for New York, and was off to England by the first boat. I had had quite enough of my American friends and their notions.

I have given up sporting, as I found I could make no hand at it. I shoot occasionally for amusement, and fish occasionally, but never lay down the law as an authority.

THE LAY OF THE NURSERY DOLL.

A VERY round face, and a very flat nose,
 Simply a patch of coarse-coloured rose ;
 A visage whose features are dents of blows ;
 A body inured to all the woes
 That dolls inherit ; eyes that stare
 With a fixed, idiotic, preposterous glare ;
 Limbs that hang, with an awkward air,
 From a body decidedly worse for wear ;
 Length of measurement, be it said,
 Two feet nothing from heel to head.

I have no claim
 To be known to fame
 By any particular Christian name.
 Call me Nelly or Moll,
 Jemima or Poll—
 My history's that of a Nursery Doll.

A Nursery Doll ! Do not suppose
 For a moment I class myself with those
 Of my species whom, in your promenade
 Through the Burlington or Lowther Arcade,
 You have seen displayed
 And duly arrayed
 As the period's boy or the period's maid.
 Of such as these waxen imitations
 Of juvenile over-dressed humanity
 I am scarcely one of the poor relations,
 And am far from all suspicion of vanity.
 A clumsy, misshapen figure of wood,
 Yet I've served my turn as a true doll should.
 Graceless and voiceless, I've played my part,
 Unknown to me the mechanic art
 Which makes of a doll an infant screamer—
 As seen in the windows of Messrs. Cremer—
 Shaping lips of wax towards infantine
 Parental appeal or famished whine—
 Works, in their way, I make no question,
 Wondrous as that of Frankenstein ;
 But as for a well-ordered doll's digestion,
 With this and its organs, 'tis surely clear,
 These vocal arrangements must interfere.

Thus far merely is *en parenthèse*.
 I have limned my image and sketched my face ;
 And so, having given this self-presentation,
 I will now proceed to the due narration,
 In autobiographical strains,
 Of what chiefly remains
 In my mind of the things I have seen and have known :
 For though but a mute spectator alone,
 Yet still in the world in the which I was thrown
 By my destiny's will and the state of the stars,
 I may truthfully say I have been *magna pars*.

Good reader, and gentle, whoever you are,
Has it e'er been your lot to attend a bazaar?
I don't mean to say, I would fain have you know,
A bazaar such as that which you see in Soho,
Or such as that where—

Though 'twas called in this case, I believe, Fancy Fair—
The friends of the drama were used to repair,
In the picturesque site of the Sydenham parterre,
Towards the end of July,
In years now gone by,

To decline in the passive the one verb 'to fleece,'
And strawberries buy at a guinea apiece,
While shocking cigars were unblushingly sold
For considerably more than their full weight in gold,
To lunatic youths who, night after night,
Sighed and wistfully looked before the footlight,
On the thespian divinity, once in a way
Now seen and beheld by the full light of day.
The bazaar that I mean, where I made my *débüt*
On the stage of existence, though also 'tis true,
As was soon clear enough to my doll's power of knowledge,
Like those held in aid of Maybury College,
A mart where the purchaser ought to be blind,
Was something quite different from things of this kind.

To erect a new font,
Supplying also the want
Of a painted east window in Middleton Church,
The Anglican rector—
No priest was correcter—

Whom his parish had shamefully left in the lurch—
The oft-promised funds that he somehow might raise,
An expedient adopted which was in those days
A fashion quite novel. In a word, near and far
He announced for a definite date a bazaar.
As for the many importunate calls
On local charity—problem of stalls—
By whom to be held, and how to avoid
Offence, and who were, and who were not annoyed—
Such topics as these it would haply be wise
To pass over in silence, and just to premise
That, after a good deal of local hot water,
The Anglican rector, his wife, and his daughter
Disposed of all obstacles, joyful to see
That the parish bazaar was a *fait accompli*.

Of the sundry details of that much looked-for day—
How victims of all kinds were driven to pay
Preposterous sums for quite useless wares—
'Tis the case, as you know, at all fancy fairs—

By feminine wiles,
Threats, blandishments, smiles,
How the neighbourhood came from a distance of miles—
These are topics on which preserve silence I may.
Nor need I attempt *catalogue raisonnée*
Or the articles sold, or the price, or the way
In which buyers were sold to their secret dismay.

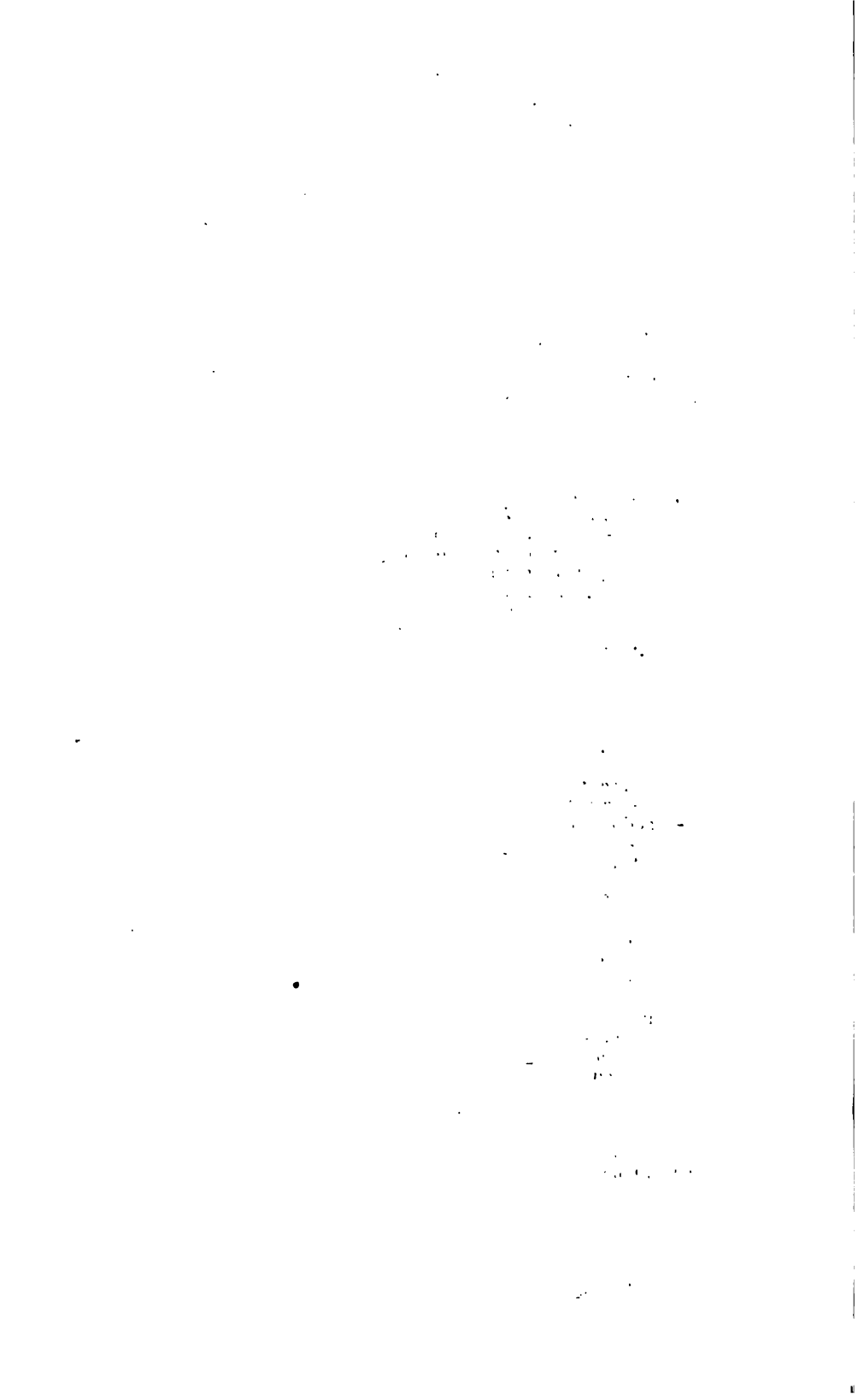
The Lay of the Nursery Doll.

Suffice it to say,
 Ere the close of the day
 I was bought by the wife of the county M.P.—
 A rich banker was he—
 Who, just happening to see
 Me, immediately said I should certainly be
 Quite the thing for his little girl, just aged three.
 The dear little pet !
 She scarcely was yet
 Of discretion sufficiently ripened to get
 Her a doll of more dainty and more fragile mould.
 So she paid for me then half-a-sovereign in gold,
 Which was certainly more than my value threefold.
 In a box, by the side of a counterfeit Poll—
 I mean parrot—I laid,
 And so was conveyed
 To my nursery home as the nursery doll.

As Christian the Pilgrim—see Bunyan's work, where,
 Having 'scaped the vexations of Vanity Fair,
 He is caught in the castle of Giant Despair—
 Felt a sudden misgiving over him creep
 When, on looking around, he saw in the deep,
 Detestable dungeons, six feet underground,
 The *membra disjecta* of pilgrims around,
 Thus unpleasantly telling him what to expect—
 Where they'd gone before, that he might go next.
 So with me, as with him,
 Through each wooden limb
 A tremor of panic immediately ran,
 For I saw at a glance, as a doll only can,
 Quick, instinctive, and cursory,
 On entering the nursery,
 The floor of the room all around me was strewn
 With the fragments of dolls distractedly thrown—
 Here a hand, here an arm, here a head, here a bone—
 Who, their duties all done, to these tragical ends
 Were compelled by their thankless and juvenile friends.
 Since now I was there, what was there to do
 But to wait, like a Stoic, my catastrophe too ?

Now, believe me, kind reader, I don't want to say
 What may seem at all harsh or out of the way ;
 But yet I am driven to observe, in good sooth—
 And conscience impels me to tell all the truth ;
 If the words sound severe, there's really no harm in't—
 I defy you to find a more fractious young varmint
 Than Augusta, ' the dear little pet aged three,'
 Whose particular plaything I hence was to be.
 Whatever she touched she'd endeavour to tear,
 To knock, or to bruise, or to smash, or—but there,
 I quickly perceived that it happily stood
 Me in excellent stead—I was all made of wood.
 Spite of all the attempts my small mistress would make,
 I was true to my warranty never to break.
 Augusta, at first, the sweet little pet,
 Would frown and would fret,
 And into some sweet pretty tempers would get,
 As oft as she found
 That, though dashed to the ground,







Drawn by M. L. Edwards.

THE NURSERY DOLL.

... would say, "That Doll of yours, Gussie, is a regular brick."

I most stubbornly still remained safe and sound ;
And, spite of each violent, murderous act,
My limbs and my body were really intact ;
 And she screamed, and she cried,
 As yet I defied

The strength and the blows she so freely applied,
Which noting approvingly quite, Master Dick,
Her brother, aged five, would say, striding his stick,
' That doll of yours, Gussie, 's a regular brick.
As for your waxen and composite things
Which Nellie [his sister, ag'd eight] always brings
Home, I should like to know who on earth cares
For those dressed-out, stuck-up, stupid affairs !
'Tis worth half a dozen—your nursery dolly.
You may do what you like, and she always seems jolly.

Thus, though I was kicked, and maltreated, and clawed
Found, to quote Virgil, '*sua præmia laudi.*'
I typified pluck, I was always game—
Ugly, but popular just the same !

T. H. S. ESCOTT.



OPEN! SESAME!

BY FLORENCE MARRYAT (MRS. ROSS-CHURCH), AUTHOR OF 'LOVE'S CONFLICT,'
'NO INTENTIONS,' ETC., ETC.

CHAPTER XXV.

'I WILL BRAVE HIS ANGER.'

LADY VALENCE, I will be frank with you,' continued Dr. Newall. 'I cannot deny that your husband is ill, and that his illness has been to me a very mysterious and inexplicable thing—until to-day. Mentally, he is very ill; but I do not say he is incurable.'

'Thank God! Oh! thank God!'

'Still, his disease has so much more to do with the mind than the body, that ordinary means will, I am afraid, be of little avail. The plain fact is, that Lord Valence has unhinged his own mind. From a child he has been of a sensitive and emotional temperament; and this disposition, which should have been combated in every possible way, through the means of healthy interests and exercise, he has fatally encouraged by the nature of his studies.'

'Do you mean to say he has brought this state of things on himself?'

'Entirely so. As would any one who gave himself up, body and soul, to the unravelling of mysteries, which, if even the Divine law intended at any period to be made more clear to us, it never meant that in their pursuit we should neglect the higher human duties to which we were born into the world.'

'Dr. Newall! you speak as though you believed it all.'

'Believed what, my dear lady?'

'That it really is possible to hold communication with the unseen world. I know,' continues Everil, rather unsteadily, 'that I began by

telling you that I had seen the—the—spirit; but I thought—I hoped—that is, I fancied——'

'That I could contradict your statement, and tell you that it was all nonsense—the effect of your heated imagination. No! Lady Valence, I can't do that! I do not know, of course, in this case whether it was fancy or not. Your nerves may have been—doubtless were—worked up to the highest pitch, and have raised a phantom of themselves to frighten you.'

'Oh! no! indeed they did not. I know now—I feel sure—that I was not mistaken—that it really was there. Yet——'

'Yet—you are surprised that I believe you. My dear child, this is nothing new to me, or to any one. What you have experienced is as old as the hills.'

'Then you think that all the stories of ghosts that one has heard are true?'

'Certainly not. Not one in a hundred is true; but do you suppose such stories would ever gain ground without *some* foundation? From the earliest ages, Lady Valence, man has at times attempted to raise the veil that hangs between us and the unseen world, and to peer into those mysteries which for some wise purpose have been hidden from ordinary sight, and he has generally suffered for it.'

'Is it wicked?' demands Everil in a low voice.

'It is not for me to say whether it is wicked or not, Lady Valence. The Catholic church, the church

to which I belong, has decided that her children had better not meddle with it; consequently I have no personal experience of its effects on the human mind. But I have, unfortunately, been called on more than once during my professional career to cure a patient whose bodily health has been wrecked by the unnatural strain upon his mind caused by this unnatural study.'

'I have heard of spiritualism, of course, on occasions,' says Everil; 'but I never took any interest in it, and I little thought it could be productive of such awful results as these.'

'No more it is in ordinary cases; but your husband's is not an ordinary case. From a child he has been unusually subject to such influences. I remember when his dear father died, and I went to announce the fact to him, he met me at the door with the intelligence that he was *not* dead, and that he had but just seen him standing in his room. I can see his boyish face now, lighted up, almost as it were ethereally with the conviction. I tried to combat the idea. I hoped then it might have been his imagination; but I soon saw I was mistaken. He has never been like other boys or men since that night.'

'Tell me all about him,' says Everil imploringly.

'He grew too slight and delicate; too fond of solitude and study; too silent and reserved in company. There was no bodily disease apparent, excepting that his pulse was higher and more fitful than was suited to his age, and that he occasionally suffered from slight attacks of fever. Then he went abroad, and for some years I lost sight of him.'

'Did he see these—these things then, Dr. Newall?'

'I cannot tell your Ladyship;

but I fancy not. I think it must have been whilst abroad that he was first imbued with a desire to turn his study of necromancy to account. When he returned I saw a great alteration in him. I ventured once or twice to speak to him on the subject; but he did not encourage me to renew the attempt.'

'Oh! why were you not brave? You should have risked his anger—anything—to save him from himself.'

'My dear lady, remember that my duty extends no further than looking after Lord Valence's body. With his mind, his thoughts, his inner self, I have no right to meddle. It is you alone, who are one with him, who have the privilege to search his soul.'

'And I have found it out too late—too late!'

'We will not say that yet,' replies the old doctor kindly; but she observes that he does not say it hopefully; 'though you have not found it out one day too soon. I knew then that your husband pursued this study more than was good for him, and I saw his health gradually give way; yet I was at a loss to link the two facts together, which, as I observed before, under ordinary circumstances, would have had no connection. But what you have told me to-day makes it all clear to me. If Lord Valence has permitted his curiosity to go to such lengths as you describe, and his mind to believe all the so-called revelations made to him, it is no wonder his health has sunk beneath the torture. Lady Valence, I have told you all I know. Be equally frank with me, or we may lose the last chance of disabusing your husband's mind of this terrible superstition.'

'I will tell you everything, Dr. Newall; but remember my knowledge only dates from last night.'

Valence has always told me that his premature death was certain, and nothing could prevent it; and yesterday he said the very day and hour were fixed. Then it came—oh! what a fool I was to faint; but I never believed that it could be really true. He called it *Isola*, and I remember nothing more. But when I recovered, and questioned him, and implored him to tell me the whole truth, he said that it had told him that he should—faltering—‘that he should’—stopping short.

‘Yes, yes, my dear child, I understand,’ says Dr. Newall soothingly.

‘Next February—on the 3rd—at noon,’ concludes Lady Valence in a despairing whisper.

‘And the poor boy—with a power of emotion that wears out his nature as a sword does its scabbard—is so thoroughly impressed with the idea that what he has heard is true, that the flame of existence flickers down lower every day, and threatens to go out at the appointed time from sheer belief in the impossibility of its lasting longer. And what a life it is to be thus thrown away!’

His words ring in her ears as if they were a death-knell. She rises suddenly from her seat, and throws herself at his feet.

‘Oh, no!—oh, no! Don’t say that, Dr. Newall! for heaven’s sake, don’t say that! You will save him, will you not—now that you know all? You will think of some means by which we may save him from the effects of his own weakness. I know it is nothing, and I cannot say what I want to say; but if my life—my fortune—if I could work—if I could die—— Oh, my God! I am talking such folly, when I want to say so much!’

‘Poor child! And do you really love him like this?’

She is sobbing so violently that at first she cannot answer him, but as the feeling of the kind old hand that is laid upon her bowed head soothes her into peace she makes her humble confession to him, still on her knees.

‘I did not once. The conditions of my father’s will that brought us together were repugnant to me. They roused my worst feelings, and I almost hated him. But since we have been man and wife—since I have lived with him, and seen how good and honourable and kind he is, and what a world of tender feeling lies hid beneath his gentle nature, I have learned’—in a lower tone—‘not to love, I think, but to worship him.’

‘God reward your goodness to him, my child, tenfold into your bosom. And whatever happens—whether the worst we fear comes to pass, or you are spared to spend your lives together—the remembrance of this time, and the strength that has been given you to overcome your pride and acknowledge that you have been in the wrong, will remain to comfort you to the very end.’

She has regained her calmness by this time, and she rises and takes a seat opposite to him with only a trace of sadness on her features.

‘But what am I to do, Dr. Newall?’ she says, after a pause. ‘What can we do, in order, if possible, to avert this awful calamity?’

‘I am not prepared all at once to tell you that, Lady Valence. With this new knowledge in my mind, I must watch the Earl narrowly for the next few days, and see what effect the warning has had upon his general health. It has appeared to me better of late. I hoped it was mending.’

‘So did I. And if you could

only have seen him this morning! He looked so young and cheerful as he bid me good-bye. No one but myself could believe the horrors he went through last night. But Mrs. West, who has been his companion throughout this fatal study, tells every one that he is dying. And he believes it. And—'

'Lady Valence, excuse me for interrupting you, but I have made up my mind on the matter. I will speak to the Earl myself. No! do not be afraid. I shall not mention this visit to him, nor even hint that I have seen you; but I will lead him on to speak about his general health until I draw the real truth from him.'

'But will he not be angry with you? Agatha has told me he will not permit his most intimate friends to approach the subject.'

'I will brave his anger, for your sake and his own. At the worst, he can but disbelieve me, and my arguments, if convincing, may turn his thoughts into another direction. Meanwhile, Lady Valence, the one thing needful is to divert his mind. Don't mention spiritualism to him in any way—don't even allude to it; but engage him in lively conversation and pursuits, and draw him out of himself.'

'Ah! that is easier said than done. You don't know the difficulties of what you propose. In this gloomy old castle, too, of which every nook and corner is associated in his memory with some spectral illusion. He is not free from them even in his own chamber. His world is peopled with unnatural creations. He lives in an atmosphere of mystery.'

'Take him away from Castle Valence, then.'

'Where? Abroad? Do you think he would come?'

'Why not make the attempt? Ask him to go—for your sake.'

She clasps her hands together. A red glow of hope suffuses her cheek.

'Perhaps he would! And then, when we are far away from all that can recall the past to him—he and I, together and alone—I shall have courage, perhaps, to speak openly and do combat with his fears to convince him that it is imagination. But no! no!' she continues, shrinking back, as the thought of what she saw in the library the night before comes back upon her mind. 'How can I say that when I know it to be real—so real?'

'The apparition may be real, Lady Valence. It is no reason that its prophecy should be real also. The line of argument I should wish you to adopt with your husband is, not that his sense of sight has deceived him, but his sense of reasoning.'

'I see—I understand,' she says, rising. 'Dr. Newall, how can I thank you sufficiently! You have given me hope. It is but a glimmer, but it is hope.'

'Your Ladyship has given me more than hope,' he answers cheerily. 'You have given me the certain assurance that my dear friend's son has at last some one to care for and look after him. Lady Valence, I never liked Mrs. West. I may be unjust in my conclusions, but I do not think Mrs. West is to be trusted.'

'No more do I, Dr. Newall; but Agatha is one of Valence's infatuations. He believes she is devoted to his interests, and she takes good care to keep him up to the belief.'

'Get rid of Mrs. West as soon as you conveniently can,' remarks the Doctor quietly—so quietly that he makes Everil laugh.

'She tells Valence that some—'

body intends to relieve me of the trouble, Dr. Newall.'

'The sooner the better. Come, Lady Valence, that is something like a face to take back to the Castle. I never saw you look so happy, nor—if you will allow me to say it—so beautiful before.'

'I am going back to *him*!' she answers brightly, as she leaves him to ponder over the intelligence he has received.

CHAPTER XXVI.

'MY HONOUR—AS A GENTLEMAN.'

NATURALLY it occupies his mind for the remainder of the day, though he is not so much puzzled by it as most men might have been.

Dr. Newall has been bred up in the Catholic faith, and miracles are no subjects, of incredulity with him. He knows that they have occurred from the beginning of time. He believes they will continue to the end, and he is not prepared to argue when they should or should not be revealed to men. But none the less is he able to see how fatal a power that of communication with the unseen world would prove in the hands of most mortals, nor how the man must suffer who resigns his will and reason to those of spirits in nowise better fitted to guide him than his own, except for the fact that they have been unclothed from the flesh with which he is still encumbered. He is so troubled on the matter that he cannot rest, and, having left his early dinner untasted on the table, strolls towards the Castle in hopes of finding Lord Valence at home. On his way he encounters Mrs. West.

'Well, Mrs. West, how is the little man going on? Famously, eh! I thought we shouldn't make a long job of it. But you must be

careful not to let him get out of doors too soon. It is treacherous weather for taking cold.'

'Oh! no, Dr. Newall. I should be careful of any one in such a case; but with Arthur, whose life is so especially precious!'

'Oh!—ah!—yes! an only child, of course. They're always spoiled. But you'll marry again some day, Mrs. West, and make up your baker's dozen.'

She alluded to her child's chance of inheriting the earldom, and Dr. Newall knows as well as possible that she intended him to understand it so; but he will not flatter her ambitious hopes.

'Even if I do,' replies the widow, not entirely displeased with the supposition, 'I don't see how it will make any difference to my dear Arthur's prospects. How ill poor Valence is looking, Doctor!'

A notion comes into the Doctor's head. He will question this shifty little woman and try to bring her to book before he sees the Earl, so that he may have some foundation on which to rest his sudden determination to trace the cause of his indisposition to the root.

'Very ill, Mrs. West; and I have had reason to think lately there is some ulterior cause for his illness, which has not yet been disclosed to me, and without discovering which my remedies will continue to be of no avail. Now, I think you can help me in the matter. You are the Earl's constant companion, I may say his most intimate friend. You have assisted him also, if I guess rightly, in the pursuit of this study of necromancy, to which he is so much addicted. Now, tell me the truth. How far does he permit it to affect his daily life?'

How quickly the wind changes. It may be blowing in your face one moment, and apparently, without rhyme or reason, you find it

against your back the next. Mrs. West's tactics are like the wind. She commenced the conversation with the idea of hearing Dr. Newall reiterate his former statements that Lord Valence's symptoms are such a puzzle to him that his disease must take its chance; in which case she would have confirmed his suspicions, and lamented with him the sad prospect of their mutual bereavement; but directly she hears his appeal to her to disclose all she may know of Valence's private studies, and the effect they have produced on his mind and body, she scents danger and disappointment in the distance, and is ignorance itself upon the subject.

'Necromancy, Doctor? What an awful term! Do you mean spiritualism? Just sitting at a table, and all that kind of nonsense?'

'No, Mrs. West. I don't mean any kind of nonsense. I mean this study which is affecting Lord Valence's brain, and may be productive of the most fatal consequences to his health. Do you not pursue it with him?'

'Do I not, what is called "sit" with him, you mean. Oh, sometimes.'

'How often do you call "sometimes?" Every day?'

'Oh! now, Dr. Newall, how do you suppose I could attend to my darling child, and to dear Valence himself, for that matter, if I were always playing at turning tables? No, of course not.'

'Every other day, perhaps?'

'I really couldn't say. I go when dear Valence asks me, just to please him, you know, for an hour or so, after the rest have gone to bed.'

'And what occurs at these sittings? Please be frank with me, madam. Your brother-in-law's life may depend upon your answers.'

How well she knows it!

'I wish you wouldn't talk in that horribly solemn way, Doctor; you make one feel so nervous. Besides, what have our little *séances* to do with dear Valence's health?'

'Everything, as I imagine.'

'Oh, Doctor! What, just watching a table turn round, or hearing it rap? How could that hurt anybody? I am sure I would never sit again if I thought so. I should be afraid of it for myself.'

'Do you mean to tell me that, after so many years of patient investigation on the part of Lord Valence and yourself, Mrs. West, nothing more occurs at these *séances* than you have already mentioned? No sounds or touches—no appearances?'

'No *ghosts*, do you mean? Goodness, Doctor! *no*! Do you suppose I should be alive to speak to you about them if there had been *appearances*? Good heavens! how you make me creep! I feel as if I should never be warm again.'

'Then what are these faints or fits—these lengthened periods of unconsciousness, which I understand Lord Valence suffers from?'

He looks at her sternly, and Agatha does not quite know what to answer. If she denies all knowledge of the Earl's trances she may be convicted of falsehood, for Valence may have mentioned them himself to the Doctor, or the servants may have been bold enough to carry the report to him. Agatha seldom finds herself in a quandary, but she is in one now. Yet, Cat-like, she shuffles out of it, though tamely.

'Oh! his faints, you mean. People foam at the mouth, don't they, when they have fits? Besides, I know these are faints. I have often fainted myself. There is not much danger in fainting, is there?'

'The question now is, not what

is dangerous, or what is not, but how far has this disease gone. Why have I not been informed of Lord Valence's fainting? You have seen me constantly, Mrs. West, and have discussed this subject almost as often as we have met. Why have you never directed my attention to this phase of his illness?"

'I really did not think it was of sufficient consequence.'

'Does it occur often?'

'Oh, dear, no!—only occasionally. When he is over-fatigued, I suppose. You will allow that I have never denied that he is very weak, Dr. Newall.'

'How long do the attacks last?'

'Not very long. They are ordinary fainting fits.'

'Yet a rumour has reached me of his having had one that lasted above an hour, Mrs. West.'

She colours at this.

'Ah! that was an exceptional occasion; and I should have sent for you then, of course, Dr. Newall, if it had been in the day, but it took place at night.'

'You might have told me of it afterwards.'

'Well, perhaps I should; but poor dear Valence is very sensitive, you know, and most averse to the subject of his health being commented on. He would not be pleased to hear that we ever discussed it together.'

'He must hear it without being pleased, then,' answers the Doctor roughly, 'for I am determined to sift this matter to the bottom. Is the Earl within doors?'

'I think so; I am not sure. But, oh! Dr. Newall,' continues Agatha, with real alarm, 'I *hope* you will confine your inquiries entirely to his bodily health, and not mention a word about spiritualism. He will never forgive you if you do.'

'I shall act for the best, madam,

and say and do exactly as occasion requires, without any reference to Lord Valence's feelings. The business has gone too far for that now.'

'But it is matter of so entirely private a nature, Doctor. I don't think any friend, however intimate, has a right to pry into the secrets of another's breast.'

'I hope I have always proved myself a friend of Lord Valence, Mrs. West; but in this instance I go to him purely in the character of his medical adviser.'

'But you will startle him; you will shock his sense of delicacy if you dash at once into a subject which he has considered a profound secret. Let me go to Valence first, Doctor. Let me prepare him.'

'By no means!' says the Doctor, as firmly but gently he puts her on one side. 'I do not need your assistance, Mrs. West. I wish to see Lord Valence by himself; and if he is not at home when I call, I shall wait until he returns,' and so saying, he leaves the little widow very ill at ease, and puzzled to conjecture what can possibly be the issue of the coming venture. Will Valence be so weak as to disclose all; and if he so discloses it, will Dr. Newall have the power to laugh him out of his belief, or convince him of its fallacy? Who can have aroused the Doctor's suspicions?

As this question presents itself to her mind, a sudden look of intelligence—of disappointment—of fear, passes over her features. She would run after the Doctor, and at all risks forestall the communication he is likely to receive, so as to infuse a little of her own colouring to the facts which must inevitably startle him into further inquiry; but he is already past the possibility of being overtaken. Even as she looks round for him,



the first of these is the fact that the majority of the population of the United States is now living in urban areas. This is a result of the process of urbanization, which has been going on since the beginning of the nineteenth century.

The second factor is the fact that the majority of the population of the United States is now living in the South and West. This is a result of the process of migration, which has been going on since the beginning of the nineteenth century.

The third factor is the fact that the majority of the population of the United States is now living in the North and East. This is a result of the process of migration, which has been going on since the beginning of the nineteenth century.

The fourth factor is the fact that the majority of the population of the United States is now living in the Middle West. This is a result of the process of migration, which has been going on since the beginning of the nineteenth century.

The fifth factor is the fact that the majority of the population of the United States is now living in the South. This is a result of the process of migration, which has been going on since the beginning of the nineteenth century.

The sixth factor is the fact that the majority of the population of the United States is now living in the West. This is a result of the process of migration, which has been going on since the beginning of the nineteenth century.

The seventh factor is the fact that the majority of the population of the United States is now living in the North. This is a result of the process of migration, which has been going on since the beginning of the nineteenth century.

The eighth factor is the fact that the majority of the population of the United States is now living in the East. This is a result of the process of migration, which has been going on since the beginning of the nineteenth century.

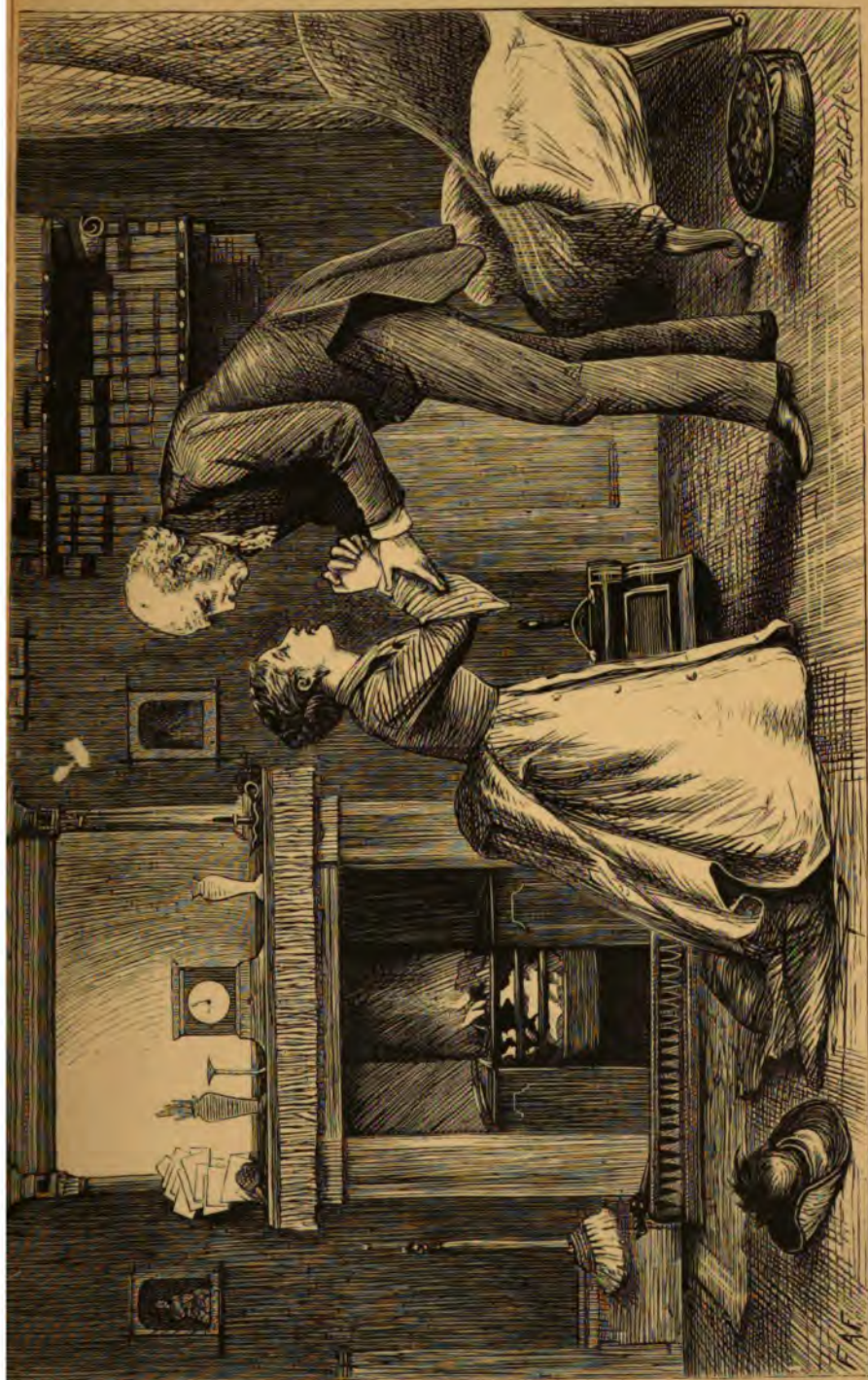
The ninth factor is the fact that the majority of the population of the United States is now living in the Middle West. This is a result of the process of migration, which has been going on since the beginning of the nineteenth century.

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The thirteenth factor is the fact that the majority of the population of the United States is now living in the East. This is a result of the process of migration, which has been going on since the beginning of the nineteenth century.



Drawn by F. A. Fraser.

OPEN SESAME!

'You will save him, will you not?'

she sees him disappearing within the Castle walls; and she has no better companions than her conjectures and her fears for the remainder of her walk.

* * * * *

When Lord Valence hears that Dr. Newall is waiting to see him, he comes bounding into the library as if he were a boy.

'How are you, Newall? Splendid day, isn't it? I've just come back from Ballybroogan. Have you seen Lady Valence? I left her here not a minute ago, tossing my poor old books hither and thither, and transforming all my bachelor neatness into exquisite confusion.'

He seats himself on the edge of a table as he speaks, and with folded arms regards the Doctor smilingly. His eyes are bright; his cheek is flushed; his hair thrown carelessly off his forehead. His old friend thinks he has never seen him look happier or better before. Is it possible that this is the man who believes in a gloomy foreboding of death to such a degree as to permit it to sap the very springs of his existence? It appears incredible. And yet, beautiful as are his speaking features at this moment, there is a hectic spot upon his cheek and a glitter in his eye, too deep, too bright for health. He looks like a votary of that terrible god Consumption, who bedecks her victims to the last, hides their sunk cheeks with roses, and lights up their dying eyes with the lamp of fever.

'No, my Lord, I have not seen her Ladyship since I entered the Castle. I trust that she is well.'

'Oh, I think so; but she complains of a little headache this morning. We were up rather late last night.'

As he says the words, some happy recollection strikes him,

and a glorious smile breaks out over his countenance.

'Is she not beautiful, Newall? I don't think I ever saw such another figure, so graceful, so elastic, and yet so firm. It is difficult to conceive her ever getting ill.'

'She appears, indeed, the very embodiment of health. I wish she could impart a little of her strength to you, my Lord. You do not make the progress I should like to see.'

His countenance falls directly.

Oh, I'm well enough, Newall; as well as I shall ever be. Don't trouble yourself on my account.'

'But I *must* trouble myself on your account, my Lord. It is my duty as well as my interest. And when I consider how much depends upon your well-doing; what wealth you have to account for; what a wife to cherish; what a long race of heirs, I hope, of which to be the founder, I feel that no more sacred charge could have been placed into my hands by your dear lamented father than the charge of your health.'

Lord Valence has shifted his place during this colloquy: he has moved from beneath the piercing gaze of the doctor's eyes; and is now walking restlessly about the apartment, taking up a book from one table and laying it down on another, but never bringing himself again under the scrutiny of his old friend.

'You have nothing to reproach yourself with, Newall,' he says at length. 'You have done your part of the business conscientiously, and if I don't repay your care, it's the fault of my constitution alone. The cleverest doctor in the world can't keep life in a sinking body when the leak is sprung by Heaven.'

'I don't believe Heaven has anything to do with the springing

of your leak, my Lord,' replies the Doctor bluntly.

Valence colours.

'I don't understand you. You've been attending me now for some years. I've followed your advice whenever it was practicable, and I've swallowed all your stuff. Why, didn't I even embark on the venturesome sea of matrimony on the strength of your advice? I don't see what a man could do more. And yet I don't get well. Feel my pulse!'

'It is at fever heat, my Lord.'

'And half an hour ago it was scarcely perceptible. My spirits—my energy—my appetite, play for nothing. I become feverish for the same cause. I am strong one hour, and utterly prostrated the next. You may be puzzled at my symptoms, but I know them well, Newall, and they mean—Death.'

'I know, too, that they mean—Death.'

'You agree with me at last, then?'

'Not entirely. The death you would signify is a succumbing to God's will. The death I mean is—suicide.'

'Newall!'

'It is the solemn truth, my Lord. There is no physical reason you should not live. If you die before your time, it will be by your own hand.'

'This is strong language, Newall. I have not been used to hear you speak like this.'

'Because I have never seen so clearly as I do now the stern necessity there is for my so speaking. I have watched your malady increasing year by year. I knew there was no ordinary cause for it, and I hoped that marriage, with all the interests and joys it brings in its train, might have the effect of weaning you from the contemplation of yourself. But what has been the result? You

have youth and every prospect of happiness; wealth at your command; a wife who loves you dearly——'

'God bless her!' cries his listener.

'Whom any man might be proud to call his own; for whom most men would sacrifice their dearest interests; resign their most cherished hopes; and yet for whom—excuse me, my Lord, if I offend you—you appear to me to be unable to give up even your unhallowed pursuits.'

Valence's countenance clouds over again.

'I don't understand you,' he repeats.

'Answer me frankly, my Lord. Remember I have known you from a boy. Does the conviction that you are not long for this world spring entirely from your observation of your own health, or is there not rather some ulterior cause for your belief?'

He has touched his patron now upon his tenderest point, and the galled withers wince.

'I cannot perceive the object of your curiosity, Newall. Your business lies with my body; please to confine yourself to it.'

'My business lies with your general health, and it is your mind which is affecting your body.'

'I don't believe in the mind affecting the body. Besides, my theory—my conviction—Newall,' he continues, suddenly interrupting himself, 'you know of old how averse I am to metaphysical discussions on the reason of my ill-health. If you consider that my blood is out of order, or my heart is affected, or any other of my natural functions require regulation, regulate them, for Heaven's sake, but leave the subject of my brain alone. I will attend to any reasonable direc-

tions you may give me. I will swallow any filth you may think fit to order me, but I won't be talked to as if I were a child or an idiot, ready to frighten myself into fits at the first shadow that crosses my pathway. You might as well tell me I am mad at once.'

'You are mad,' cries the old doctor, reckless of the effect his bold words may create. 'You are worse than mad, my Lord, to throw away all your chances of happiness for the sake of maintaining your reserve. I know you have a secret canker gnawing at your heart, that some thing, or act, or person, has laid on you a burden too heavy for you to bear. You will not confide in me—you will not take advantage of the benefit my advice—my reasoning—might afford you; and if you die (which God forbid!), weighed down by a load no mortal could sustain unaided and unharmed, you will as surely die by your own hand as though you placed the muzzle of a pistol in your mouth and blew out your brains.'

The old man's unexpected energy has startled Valence, who leans his weight against a table and turns pale visibly.

'Confide in me, my Lord,' continues Dr. Newall, 'tell me everything, and it will go hard but we will find a remedy between us by which to exorcise the demon that holds you in his thrall.'

'It is impossible—it would be useless,' says the Earl, with closed teeth. 'You do not know of what you speak!'

'But if I do not know, I may be able to guess. Your secret studies are no secret to me, my Lord; neither are they incomprehensible. I can imagine the hold they have gained over your natural feelings, the fetters they have cast about

your mind. But let me hear the worst; disclose to me the utmost lengths to which they have misled you—the depths of mystery into which you have dived, and I may yet aid you to see daylight from the bottom of the dark well in which you seek for Truth.'

The Earl becomes excited, his gestures are violent, his voice raised and discordant.

'I tell you again it is impossible. I can never tell what you desire, to you or any man. I have passed my word of honour. Now that you know that, you know that you renew the subject at your own risk.'

'Heaven pity you!' says Dr. Newall sadly. 'And you can resign that lovely wife of yours, give up all her love, her sweet companionship, her true sympathy, and go down into the grave before your time, for the sake of a chimerical honour which binds you to your superstition like a slave!'

'It would be useless to break my word,' says Valence faintly. 'Nothing can save me now.'

'It is not true!' exclaims the old doctor loudly. 'God can save you, my Lord—but He helps those who help themselves. Be a man! Shake off this slough of superstition and blind bigotry which has unsexed you. Resolve to give up your unnatural studies: to have nothing more to do with them or anything that concerns them, but to take your place bravely, like other men, upon the battlefield of life; and I'll engage, with the blessing of Heaven, to restore you to your former health and to your wife.'

'Can it be possible?' cries Valence, starting forward, his face all aglow with the bright picture conjured up before him. 'To live, for her, with her! Oh, no—it will never be. It is too good to be true!'

At this moment the library door opens, and Everil appears upon the threshold.

'May I come in, dearest? Ah, Dr. Newall, I did not know that you were here.'

Valence does not answer, but he turns his eyes wearily towards her. She comes forward and lays her hand upon his shoulder.

'Are you not well, love? Oh, Valence! what is the matter? Speak to me! Do not frighten me like this!'

'Everil!—my wife!' is all that he can say.

'I am glad you have come, Lady Valence,' chimes in the Doctor in a cheerful voice. 'I have just been speaking to your husband about the necessity of looking a little more after his health; and now I want you to persuade him to take a holiday somewhere—to go away together for a short time, that he may have change of scene and rest.'

'You will come, my darling, for my sake?' she urges tenderly, with her arms about him.

'What would I *not* do for your sake, Everil?' he answers.

'Except—break down your barriers of reserve,' says the Doctor significantly.

'Except—prove false to my honour as a gentleman,' the Earl replies.

CHAPTER XXVII.

THE EARL'S DIARY.

'MENTONE! I have been alone with her in this sweet place for the last ten days. Winter is on the world, but there is no trace of it here. The roses and myrtles are blooming as contentedly as if they were in the midst of summer, and the sun is so powerful and the air so soft and balmy, that we are out of doors all day long, with huge

umbrellas over our heads. It is only after sunset that the atmosphere becomes chilly, and then we retreat to the shelter of our villa, and are together and—alone.

'Alone! with my dear girl's head resting on my shoulder, her sweet eyes fixed on mine, our hands clasped with a firm, firm hold, that mutely says, "till death."

'In all my life, throughout my vague dreamings, in my warmest imagination, I never conceived such happiness as this. This is our real honeymoon, our true marriage: when our hearts are no longer afraid to look on one another and to tell the truth—that we have loved and longed to show our love from the beginning. Oh, my God! I have lived long enough, since I have lived to hear my wife say that she loves me. I hardly know how she brought me here. I found myself in Mentone almost before I knew that I was coming. I think it must have been some deep-laid plot between old Newall and herself to get me away from Castle Valence. Everil asked me to come for her sake, and how could I refuse?

'Any way, I am here, and glad to be here. Would it could last for ever! There was a grand commotion at the Castle the day we left. Staunton had just taken his departure, and my friend Bulwer seized the opportunity of the party breaking up to declare his affection for Miss Mildmay. Of course the women were tremendously upset by the announcement. Alice cried, first in my wife's arms, and then in Agatha's arms; and both Everil and Agatha considered it due to the occasion to mingle their tears with hers, until poor Bulwer looked very much as if he wished he had never broached the subject, and would like to run away somewhere and hide himself. It happened on

the very eve of our intended journey, and delayed it for a day, as Everil would not stir till her friends were made happy by a telegram from old Mildmay containing his consent to their engagement. Miss Alice then, all blushes, smiles, and tears, took her departure for England; and Bulwer went home triumphantly. He's a dear, good fellow, and I hope he may be as happy as he deserves; but I can't understand his caring for a pink-and-white piece of prettiness like Alice Mildmay. She's all very well, I dare say—healthy, and amiable, and ladylike; but when you come to compare her with—well, say with my Everil—what a difference there is! The one, all fire and energy and action—the other, just a pretty simpleton, nothing more. In fact, I can't understand any man falling in love with any woman whilst Everil is within the range of sight. I tell my lady this, and she laughs and says it is very lucky for me that other people are not of the same opinion, or she might be tempted to change her mind. *Change!* Heavens! how the word went through my heart like the point of a poniard! *Change!* Is it possible her heart can be ever less mine than it is at the present moment? I did not let her see it, but I *felt* the pallor that crept over my features at the idea. For the first time in my life, I experienced the sting of jealousy. It is not a pleasant feeling. It made me cognisant at once of the fact that were it not for outward circumstances, I might be a murderer! I believe that were Everil to change towards me now—to take back the sweet love with which she has enriched my life, and bestow it on another—that I should kill him—that I should fly at his throat as a dog flies at a bull, and hang there till

he dropped. And then I should get the heel of my foot upon his false upturned face and grind it into a shapeless mass! Bah! Of what am I dreaming? Am I going to let this new, beautiful love, instead of raising my nature, debase and lower it? Oh, Everil! how unworthy I am of you! Were we to live long together, how disappointed you would become in me! But for the short time you are to be mine, I will keep all lesser feelings that dishonour our love out of sight, that you may have no bitter memories of me when I am gone.

* * * * *

'Well, Bulwer and Alice are happy, and have promised to return to the Castle at Christmas, when we hope to meet all our friends again. Staunton, too, is to be there. I cannot understand my wife's feelings with regard to Staunton. He appears to me to be a very nice young fellow—quick, good-natured, and gentlemanlike—and he is a special favourite of Agatha's; but Everil seems to have conceived a positive aversion to him. I never mention his name but she changes the subject, and has several times said she wishes she might never see him again. However, I asked him to rejoin us at Christmas, more for Agatha's sake than my own; for Agatha not only thinks very highly of young Staunton herself, but has evident reason for believing that Staunton thinks very highly of her. I have caught them several times lately whispering, with their heads close together, and looking very confused, and uncommonly like lovers, when I disturbed them. Well, I cannot disguise to myself the truth that it would be a very good thing if Agatha *did* marry again. What is she to do, poor girl, when I am gone! Everil and she do not get on as well together

as I should like to see. Bulwer cannot bear the sight of her, and says so openly. Even Alice Mildmay seems afraid of making her a friend; and the servants are really almost rebellious. No one seems to care for poor Agatha as I do; and even I must confess I should be happier, and feel freer, alone with my wife. Agatha and I had a sad scene a few evenings before we left Ireland. I think it must have been the day after we had decided to go, and I was putting away a few things in my library, when her tap sounded on the door. She looked haggard and careworn, as if she had been crying, and I accused her of the fact. She came up to my side and laid her hand upon my arm: "How can I be otherwise than miserable, Valence," she said, "when I see all confidence between us is at an end?"

'I guessed she alluded to my projected journey, and told her how my wife had extracted a promise from me to go in the very presence of the doctor who had advised it.

"And should not I have advised the same?" she answered. "Have I not had at least as much care for your health as Everil has?"

'Her reproach came home to me; for, for the last five years Agatha has really been indefatigable in looking after my comfort, and devoting herself to me in every way. I always have been, and always shall be, grateful to her for her care and solicitude; but of course my affection for her fades into nothing by the side of what I feel for my wife. I tried to thank her; but I suppose my words sounded cold; for she refused to accept them as they were intended.

"It is of no consequence," she kept on repeating. "Of course I am nobody now. I knew that it must come to this; but oh! Va-

lence, however happy you may be in the future, don't forget what I have been to you, and dear Arthur! Don't forget the scenes we have passed through together—the wonders we have witnessed—the——"

'Her allusion recalled me to myself. I left the work on which I was employed, and staggered to a chair.

"Isola!" I murmured, "my father! my brother!—how can you talk to me of a happy future, Agatha, when you know my days are numbered—that I shall never live to see another year complete its course?"

"And if so, dear Valence, why should you not enjoy life to the close? If you have but a few months more to remain with us, why should they not be happy months? Isola would have them so. They would all have them so. Go to Mantone, and be as happy as you may. It is not of your probable happiness I complain; it is that you should think I should not be the first to rejoice at it."

'But her words had quenched all my joy. I threw the articles I was packing away down on the floor in a heap.

"What is the use," I exclaimed angrily, "of my attempting to cheat myself into the idea that I can enjoy life or love like other men? The dark shadow of death hangs over everything I do and say. I am a doomed creature, and even my wedding feast is spread on a funeral pall."

"Dear Valence, this is wrong—this is ungrateful," said Agatha softly. "What would Isola say?"

'My sister-in-law has a very sweet voice and winning way; but I wish she wouldn't introduce the mention of Isola upon every occasion. I know my fate well enough—no one can blind my eyes to it; but surely I may forget it for a while—for a little while—and de-

ceive myself, if I can, into the belief that it has never been revealed to me.

"I am sick of the name of Isola," I exclaimed impetuously. "All my unhappiness, all my want of courage, has sprung from the moment I first heard it mentioned."

"Oh, Valence!" said Agatha reproachfully, "and after all her kindness—when she loves you so!"

"Was it kindness to disclose to me a secret that has embittered my existence ever since? Was it love to hang a drawn sword by a hair over my head, that might descend at any moment? That is what Isola has done for me. If she foresaw the doom in store for me, why couldn't she let me go on, like other men, in happy ignorance until the moment came? Anticipation, which is the worst part of pain, has killed my heart before my body dies."

"Never mind, Valence—let us say no more about it."

'But here a sense of my ingratitude struck me. Why was I such a coward—such a traitor to the cause to which my life has been dedicated? I turned and seized my sister-in-law's hand.

"Forgive me, Agatha; but if you knew how much I suffer! To love her so much—to know she loves me——"

"To know Everil loves you!" repeated Agatha in an incredulous tone.

"Yes. You may look surprised; but I do know it, thank God; and on the best authority. She has told it me with her own dear lips."

"Oh, she has told it you herself, has she?" replied my sister-in-law; but I did not quite like the sound of her voice.

"Her own self. Did you know it, Agatha?—did you guess it?"

"I certainly never guessed it.

It is the last thing in the world I should have guessed."

"But it is true as heaven; and it is at her wish that I am going to Mentone, that we may have a few weeks of quiet happiness together. Nor can you wonder, Agatha, that, if possible, I should like to forget, if only for this sweet, brief interval of pain, the fate that lies before me."

"Oh no! It is very natural, my dear Valence, and I only hope you may forget it. I hope you may be very happy, and find no cause to regret old friends in the possession of new ones. I hope you may never be disappointed in anything you desire, nor place too much confidence in a rotten reed. And I could hardly wish a better wish for you than that, could I, my poor boy?"

'Her words were kind, so was her manner, as she kissed and left me. There was nothing in either that I could find fault with; and yet they left an unpleasant impression on my mind, as though she thought me an infatuated fool for loving Everil when I shall so soon be called on to exchange this world for another.

* * * * *

'Everil is so different from Agatha; indeed, she is different from any woman I ever met in the world before. I did not understand her until I brought her to this sweet, quiet place, where we are together all day long, and know no one to break in upon our solitude and distract our thoughts from one another's company. At her own home in Herefordshire she was always so grand, and stately, and dominant, so much "*La belle Châtelaine*," that I almost forgot she was a girl in years; and since we have been married, her distress at our mutual reserve and unconscious fear

lest we should never love each other have made her appear still more womanly in her proud silence and melancholy. But now that the flood-gates of our hearts have been opened and all barriers are broken down between us, my darling has come out in a new character. She runs about the house, she talks, she laughs, she dances, she sings, and it is only now and then, when some allusion to the future brings my destiny before her mind, that I see a dark cloud pass across her lovely face and quench the light of her dear eyes, as though they were blinded with unshed tears. But a smile, a caress from me, has power to make the sun break out again; and I can sometimes hardly believe that the bright, happy girl who sits on my knee, or at my feet, coaxing me into laughter by her quaint mimicry, or almost moving me to tears by the exhibition of her love, is the same wilful, defiant, and apparently heartless cousin who met me on our betrothal morn with the assertion that she would marry me all the same if I were a chimpanzee. We have often talked over that time. Everil has spoken of it and lamented over it till her sweet face has been bathed in tears, and I have been forced to make her smile again by an account of my first impression of herself, and what a dreadful hoyden I thought I was taking as a wife. We have talked over everything that has either distressed or gladdened us. We have had sweet confidences that have laid our hearts mutually bare and made us feel that never again can we misunderstand each other. But there is one topic that we cannot approach with ease, and that is, Spiritualism.

Everil has attempted it. Greatly as she shudders at the remembrance of the night she spent

with me in the library—that night which proved to be the saddest and most joyful of my life, inasmuch as it gave me what I longed for, only to name the very hour when I must resign it again—she has forced herself to question me searchingly and to try and argue me out of the reason of my belief. I have told her as little as I could in reply. Why should I leave the dear child my sad experience as a legacy? Rather would I have her, when I am gone, forget that such a fatal study exists, or that it had any part in embittering the short time we spent together. She is stronger minded and more courageous than the generality of her sex; she is also cleverer and more independent. What if the relation of my experience should cause her at any time to determine to solve such mysteries for herself!

Oh! if I thought that my beautiful, blooming Everil would ever lose her health and spirits as I have done in the pursuit of this fatal and unnatural study, I would tear my tongue out to-night rather than utter another syllable upon the subject. She is very pertinacious. It is difficult to silence her when she is once bent upon discovering a thing. She coaxes and coaxes, and questions and argues, till I am fain to give her a blunt denial. Then she draws herself a little away from me, and says poutingly:

“You do not love me, Valence.”

Not love her! Good God! if she could only know *how* I love her! That I would not resign this brief life of love with her for a century without her! and rather see her eyes beaming on me as they are beaming now, for one short moment, than possess all the loves of all the other women in the world eternally.

'Oh, Everill! if you only knew how much I love you!

'Old Newall's words ring in my ears day and night: "I'll engage to restore you to your former health and to your wife."

'What would I not give to prove them true!

'Sometimes I fancy, if we could stay for ever in this sequestered spot, where it is always summer, and the bright life around us seems to deaden my ears to sounds from the Spiritual World, I might pass over that fatal date in safety.

'Pshaw! What folly am I writing! Has it not been decreed by a Higher Power than I have communicated with? Are not His Angels ministering Spirits sent forth to bear His fiat to mankind? As if I—as if She—as if anything lower than Himself could cancel His own words. There is nothing left for me but to submit.

'Yet, oh! my love! my wife! how beautiful this world appears! How hard it is to quit contentedly — whilst you are here!

(To be continued.)

CAPTIVES.

BOTH of us captives—thou to me,
And I to him—and either slave
Were lost if either tyrant gave
The licence to go free!

How couldst thou face the winter wind,
That singest ever of the south?
And I, what cheer if his sweet mouth
Should frame those words unkind?

Meeter for thee to take thine ease
Here in a soft captivity,
Than on the cold bough of the tree,
Uncaged, to starve and freeze.

Better for me a slave to lie
To his dear will, than, castaway,
A sad, unfettered maid to stray,
In loveless liberty.

Then warm thee in my bosom, sweet!
And I will warm me at his heart,
Since freedom from our bonds to part
Must make our lives' escheat!

B. MONTGOMERIE RANKING.

WEST END NOTES.

PRINCE'S—STOLEN GOODS—COUNT DE JARNAC—DR. HANS VON BÜLOW AND WORTH
—THE DINER-OUT—EQUIPAGES—NEW CLUBS—ODDITIES OF THE STREET—
THEATRICALS—LORDS RECTOR—LADY MANAGERS.

WHEN the enterprising Mr. Prince secured the large inclosure near to what is known to drivers as 'Anne's Place, his most sanguine visions never reached to its present state of prosperity. The cricketing was well enough, and might have proved one of those *petites santés* which endure the longest. But, by an extraordinary freak not yet explained—some of these days we may learn—the *fade* glances of fashion were directed to the place, and saw, in a rude shape of exercise, something that harmonised with its instinct. Rapid motion—peril to skin and limb—competition on equal terms with those of lower degree: these were surely diametrically opposed to the traditions of the ball-room, and must have seemed unholy to all the collected matrons and virgins. The truth is, the ball has gone by, as many a disheartened dowager has long since found; it neither blesses her that gives nor 'her that takes, and impoverishes both. The idea that in the ball-room desirable matches are to be made up is about as exploded as the notion that the young barrister, by attending assiduously in court, will at last attract the eyes of attorneys. It is now notorious that people merely pass through ball-rooms on their way to other places. In which desperate state of things came Prince, and saved fashionable society. Seriously, 'Prince's' is a success; and a fashionable 'ile' of the most refined description has been 'struck.' It suggests those entertainments in the last century held at what

is now the condiment shop of Messrs. Crosse and Blackwell, by a certain well-known Mrs. Cornelys; and for tickets to whose masquerades every one of distinction struggled.

What is it that has brought the invaluable Prince, with his grounds, his wheels, and his rink, into such popularity? Are our belles turning gymnastic, or do matrons love sitting in the east wind? (to draughts by the door they have long been accustomed). Can it be that the principle of the feeble croquet, long since given over to parsons as feeble, and spinsters of a congenial turn, is once more recognised? Is there a new magic in wheels and concrete? Nothing of the kind. It is stated by those who ought to know, by dowagers of average credibility, that during the past season no less than *sixty matches* were, in professional phrase, 'made up' at Prince's! Facts like these, as the testimonials would say, need no comment. But it is enough to make many a hungry matron's mouth water. Is it surprising, then, that at the last ballot about one hundred and sixty young ladies should have sought admission? Is it wonderful that the envenomed tongue of H—, which spares neither men in his jests, nor women in his chaff, should have uttered the 'slander' that the dowagers and virgins came to look for *High-men only*?

It is a touching proof of the resolution of our belles that they confront serious dangers in this cause. A fall on this iron medium

is serious, and sprained wrists, and even a broken *tibia*, are sometimes the result. As the feet are inclined to dash wildly away and leave the fair skater prone, the more prudent are said to protect themselves with a cushion. This, indeed, may be thought like the duellist who would put on a wire-wove shirt; but a fall on the back would be a serious thing for the spine. There will really be a casualty some 'fine morning'; but until a marchioness, at least, breaks her leg, the thing will go on.

The lawlessness in rifling the property of French dramatists was never so rife. The marauders are doing what is termed, in familiar phrase, 'a roaring trade.' Formerly, on any exposure, there would have been heard the whining expostulation, 'I found it on the road,' or, 'a man gave it to me, sir.' Now the band have grown so powerful and audacious from impunity, that they defy arrest, and exclaim, 'It's my own, it's my right!' Suppose a man to 'find' a suit of clothes in this way, and fit them to himself; this operation, it would seem, confers ownership! The scandal is really growing monstrous; and the spectacle of a wealthy country purloining the property of a clever neighbour to supply its own deficiency of wit is certainly not a respectable one. So does the lad at school copy his neighbour's theme. In the list given in the papers, I recently counted no less than twenty of these foreign articles. Here is the tale. 'Loan of a Lover'; 'Fish out of Water'; 'Loo'; 'Hand and Glove'; 'Clever Sir Jacob'; 'Peacock's Holiday'; 'Brighton'; 'Les Prés St. Gervais'; 'Madame Angot'; 'A Roland for an Oliver'; 'A Married Bachelor'; 'A Guardian Angel';

'The Black Prince'; 'The Two Orphans'; 'Twenty Minutes with a Tiger'; 'Love in a Fix'; 'Giroflé-Girofla'; 'Two Gregories'; 'Le Roi Carotte.' Some more could be added to the list, but I am not quite certain as to the origin of the pieces. This only shows that we are under handsome obligations to our neighbours. A good idea may be obtained of the system of 'trussing and spitting' pieces for the London markets, by the 'Times' description of "Mr. —'s *graceful little piece*, 'The Loan of a Lover,'" a well-known popular French *vaudeville*. This reminds me of an amateur acting lord who had translated a piece from the French, in which he was drilling a company of ladies and gentlemen, particularly the ladies, who were all admiration and enchantment at his work. At first, he received the compliments with faint disclaimer; but as the incense grew thicker and stronger, the young candidates competing with each other (Oh, how *lovely* that passage is, Lord —!), he was gradually persuaded into the belief of authorship. One day, I actually heard him say, 'Don't you see, I prepared for that! I gradually led up to it from the third act. It's my grand point!' So it is with our adapters. Because they prepared the omelette, they believe they actually laid the eggs. Pages could be filled with the devices of the trade.

Only imagine a couple of French writers coming to London, and, pausing at theatre doors being, met in all directions by evidence of this unblushing system; recognising 'Mr. —'s *graceful little piece*' at the Haymarket, 'Peacock's Holiday' at the Court, &c. The other day, at Ostend, I saw the original of the well-known 'Lend me Five Shillings,' and was

amazed to find how closely the 'adapter' had followed it. Of course there was nothing about 'five shillings' in it. The whole is really become a crying scandal. Even in professedly English pieces it is impossible to find pure originality. In Mr. Gilbert's 'Sweethearts,' a pretty and graceful piece, was not the motive of the first act the same as that of the parting of Dolly and Joe Willet, in 'Barnaby Rudge'? and is not the second suggested by the meeting of Clennam and Mrs. F., in 'Little Dorrit'?

An unexpected turn in the roulette of French politics has sent Count de Jarnac to Albert Gate, who, somehow, seems to have come down from the Catskill Mountains, a diplomatic Rip Van Winkle. With him arrive certain spectres of an old and disagreeable history: the Citizen King and his Spanish marriages; Peel, and Guizot, and Palmerston. It was Count de Jarnac's name that was signed to the short and *dégage* note which so airily informed the British Minister that he had been 'done,' or jockeyed, in that famous business. There was an old-world air in the fashion after which he re-introduced himself to the English people. Familiar letters appeared in the journals, reminding the sober Lord Derby of when they met at some farmers' club-dinner in Ireland; while to the cynical Disraeli were recalled old days of intimacy. The minds of both statesmen were, no doubt, a blank as to the farmers' dinner and other incidents; but when a long-forgotten and perhaps humble acquaintance recalls himself as an ambassador, the memory works in the most expansive and brilliant fashion. Taken in every way, there is something piquant in the associations of the new envoy. The names of Chabot and Jarnac

have the ring of the days of Henri Quatre and Rochelle. A French Protestant and of a noble family, he has been conspicuous for an honourable attachment to the fallen Orleans dynasty; repairing steadily to Claremont for family council, death, or marriage. Indeed, it is said that the good Queen Amélie, in her dying moments, committed the interests of the family to his care. It is pleasant even for the spectator, in this century, to see fidelity of any kind. His father, the Vicomte de Chabot, now almost a centenarian, married the late Duke of Leinster's sister; another Chabot is mentioned by Walpole as having married an English noble lady; so, what with an English education, an English wife, and long residence, it is not surprising that the new ambassador should have the exceptional gift of talking English with fluency and the proper accent. More piquant still is it that he should have been for twenty years and upwards an Irish landlord, domiciled at Thomastown, his Irish country seat. There he adapted himself to the rather exceptional (for a Frenchman) conditions of his adopted country, though there was much to remind him of the préfectorial system and gendarmerie of his own land. At country-houses and in Dublin drawing-rooms his was a familiar figure. He has a sort of manner that belongs to the 'old Court,' extra-ceremonious and elaborately courteous, with a voice somewhat quavering and husky. He writes. At many good Irish houses, and at many English ones, the Count and his dramas have been regularly presented at Christmas time. One of these pieces is a very solemn business—a ghostly lady who appears in an old German castle to a young student—and might have been received with

favour sixty or seventy years ago. The Count himself is fond of playing 'the young German student;' and, in spite of the terrible earnestness he imparts to the delineation, the effect is somewhat depressing for the young belles, who have come expecting to hear 'The Happy Pair,' or even 'Box and Cox.' The Count's drama will probably make its appearance at Albert Gate, and be pronounced 'charming,' and the Count's personation of the young cavalier most engaging. The difference is, as we all know, in the quality of the performer. Our ambassador has also written some novels: 'Rockingham; or, the Younger Brother'; 'Cecile,' and others; all with that curiously simple and *rococo* flavour. On the whole, he may be congratulated as a lucky Orleanist, though he cannot look forward to more than a short spell of enjoyment; for Albert Gate seems to change its tenants as regularly and as often as the Mansion House.

Two questions. The first: is Dr. Hans von Bülow a great player?

This has 'exercised' many; and, personally, I have tried every kind of way—even to hearing him—to reach a solution. This reservation may cause a smile; but, really, listening to the great *maestro*—charlatan or the reverse—is no aid. As for the professional critics, they make a sort of key-board, on which the whole gamut of 'gush,' rapture, hatred, malice, and ill-will, is sounded. The ecstasy is *fortissimo*, the hatred *largo*. Competent critics—apparently competent, from their position—declare that 'for two hours he held a *densely-packed* audience under the spell of his magic touch.' 'During some of his "feathery" passages a pin might have been heard to fall'—a phenomenon, by-the-way, so long

talked of, that one would be glad to witness it once at least. 'King of pianists,' 'masterly touch,' 'exquisite expression,' are the smallest compliments offered. Yet other critics sneer sarcastically at the wrong notes, and the mysterious 'rumble up' which he puts forward as harmonies of the music of the future. By 'rumble up' used an old teacher of ours felicitously to describe that smoke and noise under which the trained pianist retires from an attack which has failed. Seriously, there has been a conflict of opinion, which can only be accounted for by a spirit of partizanship. Some of this is, no doubt, owing to the performer, who is decidedly unsympathetic in appearance and manner. He is more the German professor; and, were a spiked helmet supplied, there would be an air of musical Bismarckship about him. Note his stiff, jerky bow. But he is all 'the fashion.' Money is pouring in, as well it may when a vast hall is filled, and a pair of hands and a pianoforte are all the elements necessary to entertain. There is something of the Philistine in his air; and though he is successfully spoiling the Egyptians here, it is probable that he holds the opinion of Mdlle. Wagner's father as to the relation of the money to the music of his host. But the question recurs, is he a great player, or the charlatan that some other professors sneeringly intimate that he is? That he is a good player, and even a 'fine player,' there can be no doubt; but a 'great player'? For that matter, *who* is the great player? We have the Essipoffs, Rubinstains, Walter Baches, all 'cried up' and 'cried down.' There seems to be no canon established. Certain it is that a man who plays everything from memory must have a finish, a certainty of execution, a

completeness analogous to the exertion of some act of the will conceived and completed. It is evidence, too, of an amazing power of mind. Any one, again, who has seen this master conduct has seen something amazing and novel. He really forces his orchestra to be expressive, and do what he wishes, offering a strange contrast to that sort of human metronomes who so often fill the office with us, and, as it were, trot soberly *beside* the instrument, like the well-fed cob on which an elderly vicar is mounted. On the whole, then, as our public instructors are divided in opinion, I am for this great German musician. And any one who heard him at a late Saturday Popular Concert, in Mendelssohn's quintette, would have been enchanted with his velvety yet firm and powerful touch—no muddled colours or confusion.

The second question:—Who would the reader—'gentle' or 'courteous' as he may be—take to be the most *recherché* persons in Europe at this moment?—that is, the persons who, being set down in any capital, would command from the great and fashionable the highest attention and pecuniary reward. This speculation is not so easy to resolve as might be supposed. Would Mdlle. Patti, the Marquise de Caux, be one of these attractions?—whose two or three hours' singing of a night commands two hundred pounds, with carriages, hotel and other extras furnished, to say nothing of what the French call her '*feu*,', i.e., allowance for dresses, furniture of rooms, &c.; indeed, anything she pleases. Nor is this the only welcome that she commands, for emperors, kings, princes, court lords and dames, are delighted to honour her. Her treasury of jewels must be unequalled in Europe.

But the other? Certainly, M.

Worth, the grand man-milliner. The history of success is always interesting; but certainly the career and position of this artist are more *bizarre* and singular than those of any adventurer.

Mark the quaint contradiction—an Englishman leading Paris, itself a mystery; an Englishman teaching the French to dress, another and greater mystery. Every fine lady, that is, every really fine lady, in Europe, at his feet. It was the Empire that engendered this wonderful being, for whom, as I write, I feel the profoundest admiration and respect—a feeling that, no doubt, would be lessened were I brought into direct relations with him. What must that man's honourable pride be as he rises in the morning, and thinks what is before him during the day! Despatches, couriers even, from all the Courts. This Russian princess's *trousseau*, that German queen's ball dresses, English, Danish, Greek, Turkish, and the rest. Then the innumerable duchesses, marquises, the wealthy magnates whose daughters marry into the peerage; the Americans, splendid patrons, all of whom '*must* get their dresses from Worth.' He has another class of clients, no less numerous and important, the vast army of *modistes*. Who does not know the circular of the provincial *modiste*? 'Madame Cobb, Ladies' Corsage and Robe Maker to the Court, has just returned from her autumn trip to Paris, with a rich and *recherché* stock of all the *hautes nouveautés*.' If this lady belong to a city like Dublin, Edinburgh, Manchester, and the like, she will have waited on the great man-milliner, and purchased some of his 'patterns'; not, be it understood, a mere formula in tissue-paper, by which to cut out her own finery, but one of his rich, fully-furbelowed *robes*, which she has the

privilege of reproducing for her customers. Only conceive what a *clientèle* is here; above all, what clients the Elises and others of her calibre must be! In the British Isles alone there must be some hundreds. The weddings, too, in Europe, Asia, Africa, and America; for any wedding of consequence would 'want finish,' as Mr. Disraeli would say, if a few Worth dresses were not in the *trousseau*; while your millionaire bride is, in nautical phrase, wholly 'rigged out' by the great man. Not long since, a lady, whose sister was about to be married, unfolded to us after what manner they approached this great constructor. The lady who was to be married possessed a very large fortune. Her *trousseau* was to consist of some forty dresses from this master; so that the ordering, designing, &c., were matters of time and serious deliberation. The mere getting an audience of such a being, thus actively engrossed with orders for queens and princesses, required some tact. To interest him was the first thing, contrived through one of his leading female deputies, who was duly conciliated. The rooms are bare; there are no finished dresses dispersed about on frames to entice; that is not required; besides, there is a copyright strictly maintained. The mere casual client would, therefore, be bewildered, and scarcely know what she desired, having nothing to direct her choice. The deputy propitiated, all went smoothly and delightfully; the grand artist was put *en rapport*. There was an intermediary, to whom wishes could be expressed without awe or *gêne*, and who took care they were carried out. The system was really symmetrical, if costly. His practised intelligence at once apporportioned the order with an effect and

splendour that went beyond the cost. On the basis of the forty dresses a brilliant series of original efforts was mapped out; for this great artist has no forms which he repeats. He suits all to the person, to the figure, to the position in life, with an amazing variety and originality. There is none of the vulgar empiric 'fitting on' which common bunglers require to patch their own faulty work. The measure taken, almost mathematically, an unerring result follows. His strokes are as round and true as the O of Giotto, and it seems an affront to suppose that there could be failure. Nor is the cost so extravagant, after all. The average dress, I was informed, came to about forty pounds, setting apart, of course, those prodigies of lace and trimmings, which were special; but the materials—specially made for him—are the finest the world can furnish. The silks, *not to be worn out!* Such is Worth, the great man-milliner.

Considering the number of pleasant dinners given, and what pleasant things are said and told, we must regret the vast amount of liveliness and jest that passes off into the air and is never heard of again. A few Grevilles, and perhaps Boswells, may be busy with their note-books, on their return from a party. The 'Man in the Mask' has often 'booked' the choicest of the unconsidered trifles, though half the effect must be set down to the scenery, dresses, and decorations of the little stage. Some of them are at the service of the indulgent reader.

How pleasant is composure and social presence of mind! For a general imperturbability B—— is deservedly celebrated. At a leading provincial theatre, where he had the *entrée* to the stage, he was conversing with the pleasing actress

who was to open the play, and was already seated at the inevitable table. The conversation was interesting. Suddenly the curtain rose and revealed B—— to the audience. He, of course, rushed away, in the conventional fashion, pursued by the yells of the gallery and the not-even-attempted-to-be-suppressed oath of the stage-manager. Nothing of the kind. He rose deliberately, and with a low bow—he was in evening *tenue*—said, 'I shall let Sir Charles know of your arrival. Good-bye. *Au revoir!*' Amazing composure! Of course, there was some speculation as to what had become of 'Sir Charles,' whose name was not in the bill; and, indeed, some wonder why the gentlemanly actor did not appear again.

A lively lady, when the subject of 'strong-minded women' was being discussed, made this remark: 'I notice that those "women's rights" people are invariably men's "lefts."' Mr. Dickens used to repeat this with admiration.

After Mr. Disraeli had likened the late Cabinet to a line of extinct volcanoes, some Conservative members, for whom the allusion was too refined, were asking as to the *literal* meaning of the figure. A member for one of the London boroughs said promptly, 'He meant *used-up craters*, of course.'

A French valet lately engaged at a noble house, startled the company with the following announcement before breakfast: 'Prayers is on the table!'

Dialogue between a lady and an Irish servant. 'Not at home! Would you inquire?' Servant returns: 'She's not at home, ma'am; but *she says* she'll be in in an hour.'

A noble lord lately took in a City lady to dinner. She ex-

pressed her complete satisfaction on the completeness of her country villa—the flowers, greenhouses, or what she called, 'outouses.' She added, 'In fact, we eat our little all every day.' Thinking this was a figurative way of saying that she lived expensively, the noble lord smiled, and asked, was not that a little imprudent. The *equivocal* continued for some moments, the lady, it seems, meaning, 'We heat our little hall every day.'

A man of letters was recently in a country district of Ireland, with one of those short-legged, long-backed, and splay-footed creatures ye call 'Turnspits.' The creature excited much surprise, being unfamiliar; and one of the countrymen, surveying our friend gravely, declared, 'Shure, he's an author!' The man of letters blushed with pleasure; he was found out. 'How did you know?' he said, smiling. 'By his back and shnout,' was the reply. The countryman was thinking of an *otter*, pronounced in the flattering way described.

The Bishop of —, who is *spirituel*, though demure enough, was lately entering a room at Lady —'s party. Two ladies, rather too abundantly *décolletées*, were in the doorway, and scarcely seemed inclined to open the passage. His Lordship cast down his eyes and pressed forward, when the ladies drew aside their skirts. 'The fact is, my Lord,' said one, 'the milliners *will* put such a quantity of material into our skirts, that really'——'That there is nothing left for what you call the body,' said the Bishop, slyly.

Over the door of a 'shebeen,' in the county of Antrim, a visitor lately noticed an advertisement of a dance, with these rates of admission: 'Gentlemen, a penny; ladies, *your pleasure!*' From the

same country comes a pleasant poetical effort to commemorate a dog whom the poet suspected had been poisoned :

EPITAPH.

Beneath this yew-tree, in this Oval so
completely,
Lies Hector, our dog, whom his Lordship
loved dearly.
He barked and he yowled when the
children went a-walking;
He was shot by Peter on Christmas
morning.
*I blame Archie Tobin for not feeding him
regularly,
And Mullins at the gate, who was in the
constabulary.*

A lively Irishman, asking for his letters at a foreign post-office, was required to show his passport or card. He had neither; but, with ingenious readiness, turned down his coat and exhibited his name in marking-ink on his shirt collar. The official smiled and delivered the letters. One of the diners said that this was giving one's name and 'dress.

Thus a window cleaner, in reply to the writer: 'You have a large family, I believe?' 'No, sir, they are all *able to take care of themselves.*' The ellipse here, as though the relationship and charge of maintenance were convertible, is characteristic.

'I am having myself taken in oil,' said a well-known physician, complacently looking round. 'Cod-liver, I suppose,' growled a Jerroldian.

It was lately debated what inscription should be placed on the monument of a well-known Dublin physician, just set up in the midst of the cemetery. A professional brother suggested borrowing the one on Wren at St. Paul's—'*Si monumentum quæris circumspice.*' This is of the 'first class.'

I lately read in some newspaper a description of what the reporter called 'the origin and *gestation*

of the building.' A most mysterious phrase.

The Royal carriages that we see trundling along the Mall can scarcely be considered brilliant. 'turns-out'; some, indeed, drawn from the coach-houses under the alarming pressure of foreign guests, belong decidedly to the category of Shandradan. Not so long since, when the 'cold-shouldered' Empress of Russia (no allusion to the august lady's own person) was here on what, by a strained sense of the phrase, is called 'a visit,' I saw her and her suite driving out to the country in two open carriages, to each of which ordinary posters were attached, with postboys in the usual shabby blue jackets and shining white hats!

As a matter of pure criticism, it may be said that the Prince of Wales's equipages are scarcely worthy of his taste. There seems to be but one pattern; the claret-coloured double brougham, with very high, strong horses, which would be more appropriately attached to a coach. There is, indeed, no such ugly and uninteresting vehicle as this clarence, or brougham, made to hold four, 'let out' clumsily in front, as a thrifty lady would her dress. A light one-horse brougham is an elegant little vehicle; but these hermaphrodites convey the very opposite idea to state. When room for four, or three, is required, the landau or coach should be used. At the Bois, we can take a lesson in the shape and general style of carriages; and it must be owned that both Paris and Brussels turn out more brilliant equipages than we do. There is a tendency to re-introduce the old chariot, the true framing for your *grande dame* going to ball or court. Horses, footmen, coachman, all are shown to the best advantage. 'Jeames,'

in particular, springing up airily behind, is seen under conditions which set him off to perfection. Some twenty years ago, a society scoured the kingdom, seeking out all the old rusty vehicles—like that dreadful company in France, of fifty years ago, the *Bande Noir*, which went about buying old castles and mansions for the sake of the materials. Five pounds was the price offered, and accepted, for an average old chariot, which, like the house, was pulled to pieces, and the wheels sold for carts, cabs, &c. I myself recall the visit and proposals of the agents of this curious society.

Two new clubs are on the eve of being opened, the St. Stephen's and the Devonshire; Conservative and Liberal, reciprocal bane and antidote. The St. Stephen's is a successful building, in a most delightful position, the window commanding the 'silent highway.' At night the view becomes poetical: the long lines of light, the bridges stretching across, sprinkled with lamps, and the fiery dial of the Westminster clock-tower high in the air. This building certainly improves the Houses of Parliament, by supplying a standard with which to compare them. The Devonshire has chosen a mansion of ill omen. One would think that the maledictions of ruined gamblers still fluttered through the rooms. Once, 'Crockford's,' next a restaurant, the Wellington, then an auction mart, which was to be like the Hôtel Drouot in Paris, and for which it was fitted with an imposing stone front. This auction business, which was to demolish the profitable 'Christie's' (reported to have made a hundred thousand pounds last year), seems to be the most disastrous speculation conceivable. It appeared—for I have often turned in—as though nothing

would sell, or nobody would buy or bid there. The great rooms were deserted; the auctioneer was always sorry to begin. What curious mutations! This has suggested the following:—

'Here was gluttony, dicing, the bidders'
faint stammer;
But 'tis now just the same, yes! by
heaven, sir!
They'll be eating their pledges; selling
votes by the hammer,
And gambling for place in the Devon-
shire!

How ineffably depressing is what is called the '*Cercle*' abroad. During a weary two months' banishment to Arcachon, in the south of France, I was duly, and with some solemnity—there being a pretence of keeping up the fiction of a certain exclusiveness—inducted a member of the '*Cercle*.' It was on a first floor, over the invariable café, and seemed to project on the mind, for recollection, the elements of a pageboy and some green-cloth-covered tables, and moderators with large opal shades. The air was always impregnated with stale tobacco, and the whole had the air of a doctor's well-kept apartments. There were newspapers and a billiard-table. Who were the frequenters of it I never could divine; but they seemed respectable, and evidently had money, playing piquet every night, and deeply, until the page-boy openly slept. There was no trade in the place, no one to buy or sell, as it seemed—half the houses appeared to be shut up. Yet the club flourished. But clubs are certainly overdone, as can be seen from the vast numbers appealing for support through the newspapers. This is really inverting the order. Clubs should spring naturally from the association of men; but association of men will not spring from the formation of a club. The same inversion is seen

in the case of theatres, which arise out of acting; while it is assumed that, given a theatre, acting must follow. These advertised clubs are no more than great restaurants, with annual subscribers.

A walk from the West End to the City is entertaining enough, if one learns to use one's eyes on the principle of Mrs. Barbauld's good boys. It requires some practice, the 'paying an uncommon sight of attention,' as Mr. Wegg says. I was lately much delighted with the following inscription, displayed in an aristocratic neighbourhood:—

JOS. MERRY,

UNDERTAKER;

And he desires to combine respectability with economy; and to present the means of interment upon such a scale, as shall come within the ability of all.

Mr. Dickens would have enjoyed this, and, had he been alive, should have seen it. The wish to 'present the means of interment' upon easy terms, and the insinuation that some, through lack of money, are compelled to deny themselves this luxury, is really excellent. It suggests that other gentleman of the profession, whose advertisement ran, 'Great reduction: *now is your time to be buried*'—and which is, in its way, very enjoyable. It really, in a rough way, represents that impatience with which is paid a long series of premiums to an insurance office, and the instinctive wish to realise something in return for what we have been paying so long. When there is a slack demand on his services, the poor dealer in mortuaries naturally bethinks him of the customary invitations of his brother tradesmen. There is quaint pippin flavour about the follow-

ing, which I note on a dairy cart: 'Selected cows for the nursery;' as though one would say 'selected raisins.' There is a grotesque dignity in the expression, 'a selected cow.' I notice also a servants' agency: 'Royal Livery and Domestic Institute'—i.e., institute for 'domestics.' But what is a 'Royal Livery' Institute? Again, we have all seen those framed diplomas in tradesmen's windows: 'You are hereby appointed manufacturer of artificial limbs to her Majesty'—a simple, straightforward formula. But under the late French Empire, this sort of 'brevet' was phrased in singular style: 'Convinced,' it ran, 'of the *moralité* of M. —, and wishing to give him a particular mark of our esteem and appreciation, and at the same time convinced of the excellence and merit of his productions, we hereby appoint you,' &c. The German brevet seems to lay stress on its authorisation to a tradesman of bearing the royal arms at the top of the diploma. How characteristic of each country all this is.

There is a general profaneness abroad, and people are inclined generally to lay hands on any and every ark. But the following, I own, made me gasp. 'Goldsmith's comedy, "She Stoops to Conquer," re-arranged by Mr. —.'

In some future 'Maskings' I shall deal with the eccentricities of theatrical advertising. That there is matter for noting will be evident from this specimen, which was in an Alhambra bill lately: 'The new and novel effects by,' &c. I also see advertised 'the new Robertsonian comedy-bouffe.' If there were such a thing *in esse*, it would be the most curious dramatic hybrid that the world has yet seen. All the elements are opposed and self-destructive. There can be but one kind of comedy,

which may be written by a Robertson, or any one with suitable powers. As well talk of the 'new Millaisian painting.' *Bouffe*, however, is discordant with Mr. Robertson's style, such as it was. The malicious might protest that comedy itself and Mr. Robertson were divorced: while genuine comedy and *bouffe* have nothing in common. So much for 'charming Robertsonian comedy-bouffe.'

There are, however, some cheering signs in the state of the theatrical weather. One is that of a taste for Shakespeare and really classical pieces. This, again, is turning our actors' attention to good characters well worthy of their study. It is some surprise when we find Mr. Clayton abandoning light and eccentric comedy for the serious drama, and the result shows his wisdom. *Macbeth* and *Cromwell* are the two important characters he has undertaken, and of the former very high praise comes from the country. In the banquet scene he is particularly successful. After the murder he 'ages' himself. We shall look with interest for this performance in London.

Public men, in addition to their official burdens, have a good many trials and inconveniences suspended over their heads. Among these, perhaps the most annoying is the honour of being invited to stand for the Lord-Rectorship of one of the many Scotch universities. The awarding of this distinction recurs so frequently, that it really seems to the public as though the 'encumbering' of some unhappy person with the dignity is always going on. Invitations are being perpetually hawked about; and Mr. Froude, Lord Derby, Mr. Carlyle, Mr. Emerson, Mr. Ruskin, and many other persons are importuned to

allow themselves to be put in 'nomination.' Then we hear of the 'polling,' and the 'four nations,' and certain local excitement. Seriously, the thing is being overdone; or, if the overdoing must continue, there are plenty of excellent Scotchmen, who are more fitted to understand and appreciate the distinction than English gentlemen, who do not like to mortify by a refusal. To preside over Oxford, Cambridge, Dublin, or London University is justly considered a high honour, and to this list the University of Edinburgh might be fairly added. But the inferior Scotch universities, which are little above the rank of large high schools, with their recurring 'putting Mr. Ruskin in nomination,' and their 'pollings,' are growing to be a nuisance, and they will, by-and-by, be told as much by some plain-spoken person to whom the application may be made.

Managing a theatre is a costly pastime, as some noble lords have lately discovered; but there is a method by which it can be done vicariously, without any expense or trouble. This is usually contrived in the case of a lady, who gets a gentleman to pay all the expenses, and delegates the trouble of arrangement, &c., to a deputy. There is left only an amusing remnant of management. Where the ostensible deputy has tact, and knows his business, the venture often succeeds; but more often there is a general raid on the purse of the unhappy personage who furnishes the 'asses' milk' for the experiment. Language too strong cannot be used to characterise this grossest of affronts to the audience, or the conduct of respectable performers who take service under such conditions and such companionship. It will hardly be cre-

dited that there are nearly half a dozen leading theatres at this time conducted on this principle; and it has actually come to this, that a noble art is made to contribute to a shocking scandal. Corrupted as the French audience is, it would

not tolerate such an outrage; and when, some years ago, a notorious person was attempted to be thus presented by influential patrons, she was hunted from the footlights in a storm of disapprobation and jeering.

THE MAN IN THE MASK.



A RARE SPECIMEN.

NEW BOOKS RECEIVED.

'The Neglected Question.' From the Russian of B. Markewitch. *Henry S. King and Co.*

'Vanessa.' By the Author of 'Dorothy.' *Henry S. King and Co.*

'Philip Mannington.' By H. Schutz-Wilson. *Tinsley Brothers.*

'Olympia.' By R. E. Francillon. *Grant and Co.*

'Travels in South America.' By Paul Marcoy. *Blackie and Son.*

'Elsie's Expedition.' By F. E. Weatherly. *F. Warne and Co.*

'This Troublesome World.' By Lady Barker. *Hatchards.*

'True-hearted.' By Crona Temple. *Hatchards.*

'The Game of Sphairistike.' By Walter Wingfield. *Harrison and Sons.*

THE advent amongst us of so important a person as the Duchess of Edinburgh naturally makes every particular regarding Russian life and manners more interesting than it was before. We are no longer contented with the historical facts concerning our great northern neighbour. We want to know how the Russian people live, and what they do, and if their home customs differ from our own. Under which circumstances 'The Neglected Question' cannot fail to interest. We do not recommend this novel for its story, which is slight and rather improbable; but for the insight it gives to the domestic habits of the middle classes in Russia. It is written in a simple, unaffected style, but the descriptions are sufficiently graphic to leave a clear impression on the mind. We live with Anna Vassilievna and Vera Petrowna whilst we are reading it, and part with them with no little regret.

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The author of 'Dorothy' has

gained some favourable reviews before now; but we do not consider 'Vanessa' an improvement on her former works. The principal female character commences her career under such repellant auspices, that it is difficult to get up an interest in her at the close. Under no circumstances could the deceitful, fickle Amy become an honest woman; and we think the author has used poor Charlton very badly by palming her off on him. Helen is too masculine and Eva too weak to excite much sympathy. Indeed, if the word heroine means what it used to do, 'Vanessa' is without one; and the men are not much better. Dennis O'Brien is the most manly; but, under the circumstances, he would have been more natural had he been less so.

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We remember so vividly the pleasure afforded us by Mr. Schutz-Wilson's 'Studies and Romances,' that we were rather disappointed in 'Philip Mannington.' Perhaps our disappointment arose from a complimentary reason, for there is certainly not enough of it. The story would have made a good three-volume novel; but in its present condition it is not sufficiently worked out. The principal incidents follow too abruptly on one another, and are too faintly sketched in, whilst ample space is afforded for a description of student life in Italy, which has little to do with the actual story. This leads us to suspect that, had the scene been laid entirely in Rome, it would have suited the author's pen and purpose better. The second part of the volume, 'The Alps in Gladness' and 'The Alps in Sadness,' is written in his old style, and we like it the better of the two.

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'Olympia' has already appeared in the pages of the 'Gentleman's Magazine.' Mr. Francillon has all the talent requisite to be a word-painter; but he has yet to learn how to mix his colours. His plot is interesting, but the construction is crude. The interest attached to his various characters, instead of being evenly worked in, so as to be kept in sight throughout the narrative, comes upon us by fits and starts. We jump from the convict to Olympia, from Olympia to Major Sullivan, and from Major Sullivan to Don Pedro, without seeing the least connection between the parties. The whole effect, in consequence, is 'patchy.' It is not necessary, in order to keep a secret in fiction, to prevent the reader following the thread of the story; and not to be able to do so produces a weariness which too often results in lack of interest. It is as little suited to keep up the attention in a serial as in a set of volumes. Whatever the mystery during its course, a tale, when looked back upon, should appear like a harmonious picture, light and shade blending into each other, so as to be indistinguishable. 'Olympia,' looked back upon, is like a number of short stories, tacked on to one another. It strikes us as having been constructed as it was written, instead of beforehand.

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The two handsome volumes which comprise (as the publishers inform us) the second and 'less luxurious' edition of M. Paul Marcoy's 'Travels in South America' are quite fit to be ranked amongst the gift books of the season. There is more to be learned of the country of which these travels treat from the work before us than from a dozen books of geography. M. Marcoy must be the original of the good little boy in the tale from

'Evenings at Home,' called 'Eyes and no Eyes.' He seems to have employed not only his eyes, but his ears, and mouth, and hands, and every sense he possesses, to gather for us this varied and inexhaustible fund of information. The five hundred and twenty-five illustrations also that enrich the book add greatly to its interest. We wish we could see volumes like these more generally introduced into schools. What a boon they would be, with their pictures and their fun, to the poor little heads that addle themselves in vain over dry descriptions of foreign countries, with the statistics of their population, and a list of their rivers. Let us hope they may be, and that the superintendents will commence with M. Marcoy's. We prognosticate it will be cheaper in the end.

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Mr. Weatherly, in his preface, directs our attention to the probability that some people may consider 'Elsie's Expedition' a plagiarism on 'Alice in Wonderland': he admits it is an *imitation*. We did not know before that there was much difference in the terms. Walker says that to 'plagiarise' is 'to purloin from the writings of another,' and to 'imitate' is to 'copy,' or to 'counterfeit.'

Now, we don't want to bring any accusation against Mr. Weatherly, who is a charming writer in himself, and has no need to copy any one; but if he adopts a plan so entirely original and unique as was Mr. Carroll's, and sends forth a story to the world built on it, whatever he feels, ill-natured people *will* accuse him of plagiarism. There had never been a child's book before like 'Alice.' It took all hearts because of its freshness, and a copy can never be fresh. Had 'Elsie's Expedition' been original, we should have

hailed it as an exceedingly clever child's book; as it is, we are sorry it should remind us so powerfully of its predecessor, and particularly as we consider the author is quite competent to have evolved a plan and plot by himself. He knows exactly the language in which to write for little children. We hope his next Christmas book will be all his own.

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Lady Barker's little volume can scarcely be called a child's book, although its general appearance would make one think so. It is a true Scottish story of the year 1740, and the heroine, 'Bet of Stow,' is a very lovable and admirable character, the romantic side of whose nature is entirely filled with her devotion to Prince Charlie. The adventures she goes through are as sensational as can be desired, and the end she comes to as pathetic. It is a charming story for girls.

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'True-hearted' is written expressly for the younger portion of the feminine sex, and will doubtless be appreciated by them.

Hester Wallingham and Jeanie Durant are two naturally-painted girls, but Redmond is almost too good for this world. However, it would not do, perhaps, to draw lovers in books exactly as they appear in real life, and so we must let Redmond pass muster; and Miss Temple was wise to put him in. Nothing offends very young ladies more than to offer them an

instructive story without a lover. It is the grey powder without the jam. They cannot swallow it.

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The pamphlet which contains a description of Captain Wingfield's new game, 'Sphairistike,' winds up with so long a list of noble patrons who have already bought and approved of it, that we fear we can say little to add to its popularity. All the best periodicals, too, sound its praises in no measured terms; but we suppose it will belong so especially to 'London Society' in the country that we are glad of an opportunity of introducing it to the notice of our readers. Its English name is 'Lawn Tennis,' and its great advantages appear to be that it can be played within a small space, by both sexes, and unremittingly. It is especially suited for cold weather also, as it requires some amount of activity, and there are none of the long, wearisome pauses in it which render croquet the most fatiguing of games to all but those immediately interested, and the couples who wish to flirt, 'untalked of and unseen.' The box which contains the game is portable, and the paraphernalia easily erected. The price, too, considering the necessary durability of the articles, and the amount of amusement to be derived from them, is not expensive. Messrs. French and Co., 46, Churton Street, Pimlico, are its sole agents.







Drawn by M. E. Edwards.]

‘TO-MORROW IS ST. VALENTINE’S DAY.’

LONDON SOCIETY.

FEBRUARY, 1875.

ABOVE SUSPICION.

BY MRS. J. H. RIDDELL.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE FIRST EVENING.

HAD Mr. Wright known as much about women as he did about many things—say writs, for example—he would not have spoiled the pleasure of his homeward journey by speculating on what Selina might say.

Men are very catholic in their ideas of beauty. If a face is pretty and a figure good, it matters little to the masculine mind whether the owner be tall or short, plump or slight, fair or dark, pensive or piquant. A woman, on the contrary, has, as a rule, only one standard, and that is herself. The world—the usages of society—the little commonplace experiences of everyday life—the natural and charming deceitfulness of her sex, teach her to disguise this peculiarity even from other women; and therefore it is that we so often hear the phrases ‘sweet,’ ‘charming,’ ‘pretty, fragile creature,’ ‘such a grand face,’ and other expressions of a similar character, which might well deceive any one unaccustomed to look behind the curtain.

Sitting behind that curtain, in the *abandon* of dressing-gown and whatever may be the present substitute for curl-papers—or *tête-à-*

tête at five-o’clock tea—or dreamily chatting by the sea-side while the waves ripple in and out upon the sand—or drawn into the still closer confidence engendered by a wet afternoon in a country house,—woman, talked to by woman, knows ‘all about it.’ She learns how Mrs. Juno ‘is distrustful of small snake-like women;’ how interesting Miss Hysteria wonders what people can like in Diana; how Light-hair thinks there is always something staring about black eyes; while Black-eyes says, ‘for her part,’ she believes there never yet was a straightforward woman to be found under the outward guise of a pretty doll.

We hear a great deal about the attraction of physical antagonism; but the reader may be certain this attraction never exists in the same sex. A woman’s ideal of a hero may be as opposite to herself as night is to day; but her true ideal of a heroine will be the creature she has seen reflected back from her mirror every day since, perched on tip-toe, she first beheld her own face in the looking-glass.

Precisely the same remark would hold good with regard to men, were it not that men are not in-

terested in men in the same way as women are in women.

To most men, every man he meets is a possible source of profit; to all women, every woman assumes the form of a past, present, or future rival. If she cannot talk better, she can dress better; if she cannot do either, she can 'look sweet,' and so deceive humanity. If she takes a different line altogether, and expresses depreciatory opinions of mankind—not including its feminine portion—then male vanity is tickled, and male curiosity aroused, and, like David, her victims are tens, whilst those of her non-admiring lady friends are units.

All of which facts poor Mr. Wright, through that masculine love of generalisation which is the snare of his sex, overlooked altogether.

Simply he saw that Bella Miles was beautiful exceedingly; and he therefore worried himself all the way from Paris to London over the consideration that Selina would not like it. Why he thought this, he must have failed to inform an inquirer. All he could have said, if examined on oath, amounted to no more than—

'Though my dear Selina has more than the virtues of her sex, she has also a few of its failings, and sometimes she does not care for pretty women.'

Which was quite true; but then he left out of calculation the fact that Mrs. Wright might not consider Miss Miles pretty: if that idea had only occurred to him, how happy he might have felt, *vis-à-vis* to a girl with great dark eyes, clear olive complexion, wonderful black hair, a rare beautiful smile, and an almost foreign accent.

'We shall be good friends, I hope,' he said, in his pompous, priestly, genially patronising manner.

'Dear sir, no doubt,' she answered; 'it must be so easy to feel good friends towards you.'

'You must not flatter me, my child,' he replied, pleased, nevertheless, with her words; and then he laid his hand softly on the girl's head, and stroked her dark hair thoughtfully, the while he saw her expression alter, and the sunlight that had glanced across her face change to shadow.

How many times in the after-days he beheld the same change turn the dark eyes, from sunlit waters to pools of darkness, it sickens him now to remember.

For liking him, she proved so good and so true; not one of his own children, charming as the Rector thought they were, served him with so sweet an alacrity as she.

From the hour they met first in Paris, till the end, he found no change—no shadow of turning in his new *protégée*: whilst she—?

If you asked Mr. Wright how she found him, he would answer impatiently:

'I was a man beset. What is the use of looking back? If I did wrong, I am sorry for it.'

And he is, without any 'if' about the matter. Between Mr. Wright's self, and God, there lies knowledge of a story the Rector would give all he now possesses to be able to remember as untrue. To him, in the watches of the night, there come dark eyes, and low-toned voice laden with reproaches—eyes, the language of which he ought to have been able to understand; voice, musical with the burden of an unspoken sorrow. A life laid in his hand, as it were, to answer for—laid there by chance, as it seemed, but really, as he afterwards understood, by no chance at all; which he used for his own purposes; which he marred because he, a

servant of the Almighty, had found himself the slave to debt, and could furnish nor eyes, nor ears, nor understanding, save how best to keep creditors at bay, and continue at Fisherton the shiftless, harassed life he had led every day since the first hour of his marriage.

It is of no use his mentioning these visitations to Selina, his wife.

An admirable woman still, no doubt: good to the poor, fond of her children, attached to her husband, lenient to the peccadilloes of her servants,—nevertheless quite persuaded that Mr. Irwin was very little better than a swindler; and Bella Miles, a bad, unprincipled, deceitful girl, who ought never to have been permitted to sit, clothed in wickedness and duplicity, by any Christian hearth.

At the particular Christian hearth mentally referred to by Mrs. Wright, Mr. Wright and Miss Miles arrived in time for that composite meal, a 'meat dinner.'

Thinking, probably, that Miss Miles might consider there was safety in a multitude, Mrs. Wright had elected for the whole of her family to greet the new arrival; and accordingly, from Miss Maria down to the 'puling infant,' represented by Rosa, the latest arrow in the rectorial quiver, all the children sat round the table, staring at the newcomer with that delicate consideration which obtains amongst young animals of the human species.

Under such circumstances Miss Miles naturally became nervous. She spoke French when she should have spoken English; and then when she apologized, the middle-sized children giggled, and the elder smiled with that air of superiority natural in the offspring of clergymen of any denomination in England; whilst the small fry

set her with their round eyes, and mouths like the letter O, and wondered to themselves why she did not eat cake when it was pressed upon her—or, as an Irishwoman, then priestess of the culinary department at Fisherton Rectory, remarked subsequently, 'Make a baste of herself like the rest o' them.'

'Curran, dear,' said Mrs. Wright, addressing one of her numerous offspring, 'run away to the kitchen and tell nurse Mary to send us some more butter; don't drop it by the way; that is a good boy.'

The good boy so addressed involuntarily let one leg slip from the front to the side of his seat, but made no further sign of hearing, every sense being apparently absorbed in staring at the stranger.

'Curran, did you hear me?' asked his mother languidly.

'What do you mean, sir, by not doing what your mama tells you?' inquired Mr. Wright, who always supported the maternal authority. 'Sit still, my dear,' added the Rector to his guest, who had involuntarily risen to do Mrs. Wright's bidding—the only creature at the table who seemed willing to perform an errand; 'we do not expect you to fetch butter from the pantry—which, indeed, our servants ought to do, as they are paid for it,' added poor Mr. Wright, with a reflective sigh.

'Ah! Dion,' said Mrs. Wright plaintively, 'Miss Miles can understand, I am sure, what servants have to do in a house like ours. Bun, Curran, and perhaps I may find something for you about twelve to-morrow.'

Thus entreated, Curran, who had no fear before his eyes of anything which might have made him move much more rapidly, slid down from his chair and repaired to the kitchen, having first fortified himself for going into the

wilderness by seizing a great hunch of bread.

Armed with this, he made his way to the servants' quarter, where he gave a full account of his impressions of Miss Miles to an appreciative audience.

'Jus' like slocs,' said one who had first seen the young lady.

'A skin like a wild Indian,' added another, who had heard Mrs. Wright express an opinion adverse to Miss Miles' complexion; and so the kitchen criticism proceeded, while the parlour waited for its butter.

'Maria, ring the bell,' said Mr. Wright at length; whereupon Miss Maria rose and rang a sharp summons, which fetched the new servant from the conversational abysses in which she had been plunged.

'Did not Master Curran tell you we wanted some more butter?' asked Mrs. Wright.

'No, ma'am: and there isn't any more in the house,' was the concise answer; at which Miss Miles blushed crimson, just as though she had consumed the reserve fund herself.

'Hey! ho hum!' sang Mr. Wright to himself, gently tapping his chest.

Spite of the debt and the humiliation, and the work and the worry, and the mental wear and tear, these little *contretemps* were not of infrequent occurrence, and the Rector might have become accustomed to them. But the Rector could not become accustomed to them, so cut short Mrs. Wright's indignant remonstrance with the servant upon the iniquity of allowing 'things to run out without informing her, Mrs. W., of the fact,' by saying:

'You can go, Mary.' Then, turning to Miss Miles, he added, 'Such accidents will happen.'

Which was quite true, as Miss

Miles found before she had been two days in the house.

Tea finished, and all the children fed, Mrs. Wright proposed an adjournment to the drawing-room, where, after having looked out over the garden, on which a drizzling rain was falling, and advanced various topics for conversation and exhausted them all, and talked at great length of Paris—which Mr. Wright called, in honour of his recent visit, Pa-ree—the Rector, who sometimes declared 'he knew nothing of music, and wished every one else in the world was in like case,' merely as a new device for passing time, and as a polite attention to their new inmate, asked Miss Miles to play.

Miss Miles immediately rose to comply with this request—rose blushing, as was her wont.

'Shall Maria fetch your music down for you, dear?' suggested Mrs. Wright; 'or will you look over the girls' pieces and see if there are any you know?'

'Thank you,' answered Miss Miles, 'but I can manage without the notes, I think.'

'The true way—the true way,' commented Mr. Wright, watching her as she took up her position before the Broadwood square, which was always open on every working day, and very frequently not closed at night.

'You will find it a little out of tune, I am afraid,' remarked Mrs. Wright.

'It is, rather,' agreed Miss Miles, as she ran her fingers over the keys: and, indeed, even had the instrument been young as it was old, it could scarcely have proved otherwise. The practice of Kalkbrenner's exercises for a few hours per diem, to say nothing of agonised attempts to hammer out operatic airs 'simply arranged for young beginners,' and national

melodies arranged for no one in particular, had generally exercised a somewhat detrimental influence upon the hammers.

'Now, Curran,' said Mrs. Wright, 'if you do not keep quiet, I shall send you out of the room;' whereupon Curran made a hideous face at Rosie, who immediately burst into shrill shrieks of laughter.

'You naughty boy!' Mrs. Wright was beginning, when the opening bars of the piece Miss Miles had selected literally stopped her utterance.

No 'trying back' now—no fumbling amongst the intricacies of unfamiliar notes—no mistakes between sharps and flats—no slurring over difficult passages.

A thorough musician had her hands on the keys, and the old piano knew this, and gave out under her touch such tone and power as time and ill-usage had still left in its frame.

Ordinarily, it was a cracked, vibrating-stringed, feeble-voiced instrument, the notes of which rattled, while suffering at the hands of the Misses Wright, like loose teeth; but that evening it seemed to have resumed its youth once more, and answered to the clamour of martial music—to the hurrying of many feet—to the steady, stately march of an advancing army—to the melody of exultation and the lament of sorrow.

For suddenly the key changed into a minor, and then the piano told a story of such woe and such tenderness—of such sweet sadness, such subtle longing regret—that its own weakness and age were forgotten in the pathetic beauty of the recited tale.

'Beautiful!—beautiful!—charming!' exclaimed Mr. Wright, who did indeed consider he had listened to a performance as wonderful as unexpected.

'Thank you,' said Mrs. Wright;

and the Rector, looking at her, knew something was wrong.

'What is the name of that?' asked Miss Maria, who had hung about the piano, trying, perhaps, to 'catch the knack,' as fond mothers sometimes counsel their darlings to do.

As for Rosie and Curran, they both sat with their eyes and mouths wide open, precisely as they might have sat had the house been coming down about their ears. They were frightened into good behaviour. When that old piano, which they had thumped with no gentle hands themselves, took to making such a noise, what might not happen next?

'And all without any turning over, too,' secretly thought Curran, who had hitherto regarded that part of the performance as essential to success.

'You sing, I am sure,' said Mr. Wright, as Miss Miles, after dreamily touching a few chords, was about to leave the instrument. 'If you are not too tired, pray favour us with one little song.'

Miss Miles laughed, and resumed her seat. For a few seconds her fingers wandered over the notes, as if uncertain of the air they should select; then she began the accompaniment to that which, if not the sweetest of all Irish melodies, is, at all events, sweet exceedingly—'Luggelaw,' mated by Moore to words flowing and graceful.

The drawing-room at Fisherton was one well adapted for hearing music to advantage, and in the silence of that summer's evening the singer's voice throbbed through the apartment, filling each remote corner with melody and pathos.

For a moment after the last note died away there ensued a dead silence, which Mrs. Wright broke by saying:

'You have an exquisite voice, and sing beautifully. Dion, will you

ring for candles? I think it must be nearly time for prayers. Maria, close the piano;’ which was a blow to Maria, as she had been hovering about the instrument, in hopes of being requested to play ‘Il mio Tesoro.’

Mrs. Wright, however, was a clever woman, and thought it better to defer the revelation of her daughters’ accomplishments to some future occasion.

She had expected a Miss Miles, but not the Miss Miles who appeared at Fisherton.

She had expected a vague ‘miss,’ with little vanities, little affectations, little knowledge, a smattering of learning, but for this girl-woman she was not prepared; and Mrs. Wright felt she must reconsider the position.

And for this reason Mrs. Wright, when discomfited over Miss Miles’s instrumental performances, and astonished at her singing, fell back upon her own lines, and suggested that safest of all manoeuvres, prayers.

Which stopped further hostilities and surprises for the time, and gave her the night to organise and reflect.

‘Well, my dear,’ said the Reverend Dion, when, the family all in bed, he and his wife sat *tête-à-tête* in the study—Mr. Wright imbibing that tumbler of punch, made out of the best Irish whisky—whisky the friend who sent it knew had never paid the Queen a halfpenny—which often wooed sleep to visit the rectorial pillow, when otherwise she might have been requested long enough and vainly enough to do so—‘Well, my dear, and what do you think of Miss Bella Miles?’

‘I do not know what to think,’ answered Mrs. Wright.

‘Of course, of course,’ agreed the Rector. ‘It is indeed early to form an opinion as to her heart

and disposition.’ Here Mr. Wright handed his wife a wineglassful of the subtle beverage contained in his own tumbler. ‘What do you think of her looks?’ he ventured.

‘Well, I don’t think she is quite my style, Dion,’ answered the lady, with an engaging rounding of one shoulder, and the old trick of lifting her chin in the air, and casting her eyes over it, or trying to do so, which had rendered Miss Curran so irresistible at hunt and yacht balls in the days when she had lovers galore, and proposers were few as primroses at Christmas. ‘Some people—some men’—this last statement with a shake of the worn curls, and a smile that long and severe service had not deprived of all its coquettish charm—‘admire that sort of face, I am aware; but still, Dion dear, confess that, beside our Maria, for instance, Miss Miles lacks that sweet, guileless look which seems to me—but perhaps I am foolish—to be the exclusive possession of a girl who has been carefully brought up at home, under the eye of a loving mother—’

‘Ah, my dear! there are few mothers like you,’ said Mr. Wright—which was perhaps fortunate, if England were to support her population. ‘And I knew you would feel attached to this poor orphan girl. She has nice manners, I think.’

‘Unformed,’ remarked Mrs. Wright.

‘Well, she has not been accustomed to society,’ observed the Rector. ‘You will form her, my dear.’

‘I will do my best for her in every way,’ said Mrs. Wright. ‘But, do you know, she strikes me as being very reserved—and—and—odd.’

‘Perhaps so,’ was the reply. ‘She is in a strange place, and no doubt things do seem odd to her at first.’

'That may be; and yet I think no Irish girl would have risen from table as she did to-night when I spoke about that butter.'

'I think I once knew an Irish girl who would have run on any one's errand when I used to sit at her father's table,' said Mr. Wright, throwing a dash of sentiment into his voice as he looked at his wife and mixed himself another tumbler.

'You foolish Dion! Are you so fond of your old wife still that you care to remember those times?'

'If I had not you and the children to be fond of, how could I bear my life?' he answered gallantly, forgetful of the fact that without either he might at least have been free from debt; and for reply she laid her hand on his, and Mr. Wright knew an impending storm had been averted, and that Miss Miles' advent would pass over without boisterous weather ensuing.

'She will be of use to the girls in their music,' remarked Mr. Wright, after a pause. 'They can play duets, and that sort of thing together, eh?'

'I am not quite sure,' said the lady doubtfully, 'whether her style of playing is quite correct in a private person. Professionals and those kind of people,' added Mrs. Wright, with a wave of her hand towards the window, signifying that 'those kind' dwelt somewhere outside Fisherton Rectory, 'have to deal in effects; but I doubt whether I should care to have a child of ours exhibiting herself as Miss Miles did this evening. It is all very fine and Frenchified, no doubt; but I am afraid it is not feminine. And beyond all things, Dion, I should like our girls to be feminine.'

If Mr. Wright had expressed his secret feelings at that moment,

he would have said that he thought their girls were too feminine already, in the way of fine-ladyism and uselessness; but it was a rule of husband and wife, and not a bad one, to praise their offspring and each other, for which reason he murmured, 'Bless them all,' including mentally in that blessing the lonely girl, to whom his heart, or at least as much of it as debt had left under his own control, had gone out in sympathy.

'Do you think her French will be any good?' he inquired, after a pause, the 'her' referring, as Mrs. Wright understood, to Miss Miles.

'I must first see what books she has brought with her,' explained Mrs. Wright, as though a young lady leaving school were likely to have a library of immoral novels hidden in her trunks. The Rector's wife had been reading up Racine and Molière, 'La Henriade' and 'Charles the Twelfth,' as a good preliminary to conversing with Miss Miles in the language of Voltaire; but, after five minutes of the young lady's society, she decided to eschew every tongue save English.

More especially as she had her doubts about Miss Miles' English. Mrs. Wright was a very shrewd and observant woman, and, after she had lain down in bed and Mr. Wright was more than half asleep, she woke him up by saying:

'I wonder, Dion, if that girl is quite right about her H's?'

'About her what?' asked poor Mr. Wright, divided in his mind between burglary and the breaking of the Seventh Commandment.

'About the letter H,' explained Mrs. Wright. 'It seemed to me she made a mess of it once or twice this evening, more espe-

cially when she was singing. I am quite certain she said,

"There came that voice when all forsaken

This 'eart long 'ad sleeping lain."

'Tush! that is French,' retorted Mr. Wright, fresh from Paris. 'I do wish you would let me go to sleep.'

And thus exhorted, Mrs. Wright said no more—then.

Within three days, however, she was able to assure the Reverend Dion her instincts had, as usual, been true. In this wise, knowledge came to her. Fine weather and sunshine once again prevailed, and whilst Mrs. Wright sat on her garden-chair reading the latest leading novel of that year, Miss Miles at a little distance squatted on the grass, her fingers employed on some delicate embroidery, her thoughts probably far enough away.

After they had remained thus silent for about half an hour, Master Curran, stealing softly across the lawn, came with a bound to Miss Miles, and, with a sudden 'Bo-o,' clasped both hands round her neck. Then came the revelation.

'Don't you—don't you, Curran!' cried the girl, in an access of nervous irritation. 'You know I can't bear to be frightened.'

Mrs. Wright dropped her book, and took up her eye-glass.

'My dear child,' she asked, 'where did you learn English?'

Miss Miles made no reply; but her head drooped over her work, her fingers flew more rapidly in and out of the fine cambric, and a glow spread from throat to forehead.

That night Mrs. Wright, not without a certain sense of triumph, informed her husband she considered it would be only her duty to cease conversing in French en-

tirely, to the end that Miss Miles might be taught 'how English is spoken in a certain rank of English Society.'

CHAPTER XV.

A SPECIMEN DAY AT FISHERTON.

TIME passed on, and Miss Miles had settled down into her place at Fisherton Rectory. She was already one of the family. The boys called her Bella, and the girls 'dear,' and Mr. and Mrs. Wright called her both. Mrs. Wright had borrowed all her money, and the young ladies had tried on each separate article of dress she possessed, and admired some of her few ornaments so much that she requested their acceptance of those which took their fancy.

Mr. Irwin had sent down a new piano for her benefit; and though a rule was made that the instrument should be looked and the key kept either in the pocket of Mrs. Wright or Miss Miles, still the key was so generally not in Miss Miles' custody and out of that of Mrs. Wright, that the rule became nugatory, and the children worked their sweet will upon this full-compass Collard, as they had done upon the old six-and-a-half-octave Broadwood.

Occasionally Mr. Wright would remonstrate when he found Curran playing a tune with one sticky finger which left black marks on the note, or Rosie thumping the new keys with all the might of her little fat fists; but remonstrating in that house produced about the same effect as addressing the wind, and Miss Miles knew this, and wished Mr. Wright would not speak about the matter.

On the new instrument Maria and her sisters practised, and Miss Miles helped them with their music, and 'put them in the way'—

so Mrs. Wright defined the matter —of learning fresh pieces; and some duets were procured, of which Maria played the bass and Miss Miles the treble, and when Mr. Wright was easy in his mind, which was not often, he beat time approvingly, and said 'the performance was cha-ming.'

As for French, Miss Miles would have talked it willingly enough, had any one wished to hear her discourse in that language, which she soon found no one did.

'Had it been Latin, now, or Greek,' said Mr. Wright, with a merry twinkle in his eye, which showed that the humour of the position was not lost upon him, 'I could have met you upon equal ground; but French is too modern a language, and parley-vousing would be more of a toil than a pleasure to me.'

Nevertheless Mr. Wright picked up a few French phrases from their visitor, and produced them upon occasion, not without effect. As for Mrs. Wright, she directed herself to the improvement of Miss Miles' English.

'You had better, my love,' she said to that young lady, 'write me each day a letter, recording the events of the previous day, and then I will mark any errors I may find and leave you to correct them.'

Which was very good policy on the part of Mrs. Wright, as in many cases she would scarcely have known how to correct them herself.

Each morning, directly after breakfast, or at least as soon after breakfast as the Rector started on his rounds of parochial visiting, Miss Miles took possession of his study and wrote her letter to Mrs. Wright. When, as happened not unfrequently, Mr. Wright came back to indite some forgotten epistle, or to search for some

paper, or to look for some book, he always said:

'Scribbling still, my dear! why, what a wealth of incident you must find at Fisherton,' or made other remarks of a similarly innocent description.

There were some events, however, which Miss Miles did not chronicle. She did not state the number of buttons she sewed on the Rector's shirts; the state of order in which she kept his gloves, the rents she repaired in his surplices, the strings she stitched on his bands. It was not much she had it in her power to do for the Rector; but what she did perform seemed very pleasant to a man who had always before been compelled to pause in his dressing, to shout for Selina or one of the servants to come to his assistance. No shouting now was required. Even to the loop on his umbrella, to the stitch needed where the silk had given from the wire, Miss Miles saw to his little wants.

And the Rector, who liked to go out looking trim and neat, faultless as regarded his linen, and sound in gloves as in orthodoxy, felt grateful to the girl who, paying them money for her keep, still did work which no servant had ever thought it worth her while to perform.

Naturally Mr. Irwin felt anxious to know how his niece liked her new home, how she got on with her studies, how she amused herself, what acquaintances she made, and so forth. And by way of answering all his questions, which were neither few nor far between, the young lady hit upon the device of sending him each week her letters to Mrs. Wright, which letters answered all the purposes of an objective diary.

Mrs. Wright had at a very early period of the exercises noticed

that nothing of a subjective character occurred even in a single passage. Miss Miles might have been the reporter of a daily paper, so much did she say about others and so little about herself. For the gushing sentimentalism of sweet seventeen Mrs. Wright looked in vain; for any evidence of thought she scanned the written pages without success. An observant girl, able to remember the events of each day and chronicle them faithfully, but able at the same time to keep her opinion of those events well in the background.

'She is deep,' decided Mrs. Wright, 'and I fancy has a vein of sarcasm about her. Now, what does she mean by some passages in this letter?'—which the lady knew was meant as much for Mr. Irwin's information as for her own perusal.

'Tuesday.

'MY DEAR MRS. WRIGHT,

'I woke up early yesterday morning, and having got out of bed to look at the first snow of this season, decided on dressing and going downstairs. There, to my amazement, I found Nurse Mary, who explained the extraordinary *phenomenon* by stating "she had not slept a wink all night with the toothache."

'I asked her why she did not have the tooth out, and she replied, that "she did not want to lose her mark of mouth before her time."

'When I offered to make some creosote out of a Times newspaper and cure her toothache, she received the suggestion with incredulity, and asked if I thought myself cleverer than Doctor Ryan, who said there was no cure for toothache except having the tooth out, unless it might be "filling the mouth with cold water and sitting on the fire till it boiled."

'We had a cup of tea together beside the kitchen fire, and the

consequence of our mutual early rising proved to be that Mr. Wright was not called till half an hour later than usual.

'Wrote my letter to you before breakfast. After breakfast we were all very busy perfecting Colonel Leschelles' room. We made it quite smart with chintz and muslin, almost too beautiful, Nurse thinks, for sleeping purposes.

'Contradictory accounts are given of this Colonel Leschelles. Maria, she says he is at least a hundred, that he dyes his hair and wears stays, that he cannot endure the sight of a young person, and that the boys always light a bonfire when he leaves the house. Rosie, on the contrary, declares he is a "sweet sweet man"; and Clara informed me as a strict secret that she is engaged to marry him when she is sixteen, that he has promised not to grow a day older until she has attained that age, and that it is agreed she is to have as much Everton toffee and as many peaches as she can eat. Curran declines to express any opinion till he knows what sort of present the Colonel means to make him this Christmas. Mr. Wright speaks warmly of the coming visitor as "a fine old English gentleman," but Julia declares he ought to be sent to Madame Tussaud's in the character of an ancient beau. He is expected to arrive laden with gifts on Christmas Eve.

'After we had done up his room, (the looking-glass is dressed with new book muslin tied back with blue ribbon to match the blue convolvulus on the chintz) it was time for dinner.

'Mr. Wright being in London, Curran offered to say grace in his stead, and though Mrs. Wright declined to allow this, he insisted at a later period upon telling us what he meant to have said. He

had heard Roderick repeating it to Frank.

"One word's as good as ten,
Go ahead—Amen."

'For this misdemeanour he was deprived of his pudding, when he at once made matters worse by saying, he was very glad not to have to eat it. If we knew what cook had put in it, we would not eat it either.

'When dinner was finished we went to the vestry to finish our wreaths, &c., for decorating the church. Many ladies *where* there, young and old. Miss Faint has arrived at the conclusion that holly pricks her fingers, and Miss Bolton is of opinion Mr. Wright ought to have a curate; she says a parish is dull without one, and that coming and going they make a pleasant change.

'We returned home tired and thirsty to tea, and found Mr. Wright at home with Curran beside him eating bread and jam. The child had waited for his papa at the gate, and stolen a march by telling him about his delinquencies, which Mr. Wright, upon promise of better behaviour, forgave; Curran then demanded bread and jam.

'Nurse waylaid me on the stairs to say if I really thought that "concrete" would do her any good, she "did not mind" letting me try it.

'Five minutes afterwards Mr. Wright rang the bell to know if the house was on fire.

'Two minutes later and Nurse was screaming out that I had poisoned and destroyed her, and entreating in a breath that her master would save her soul and preserve her life.

'As Roderick remarked—it was Satan casting out Beelzebub. This morning she declares the pain has moved out of her tooth on to her tongue.

'I think I have now exhausted all the news you would think it desirable for me to chronicle, and trusting your headache is much better,

'Believe me, dear Mrs. Wright,
'Yours affectionately,
'B. MILES.'

Pencil in hand, Mrs. Wright sat pondering this letter rather than correcting it.

In addition to the news reported by hers affectionately B. Miles, there had been two annoying affairs with the servants and three persistent and most offensive duns. Mr. Wright had returned from London out of sorts, and Mrs. Wright had, as implied, gone to bed with a headache. All these things, except only the headache, Miss Miles had omitted, but quite enough remained in her letter to decide Mrs. Wright on selecting some other form of education for that of correspondence.

'It was my own fault,' the Rector's wife argued; 'I ought never to have suggested the reproduction of domestic and family gossip. Had I done my duty properly, I should have insisted on her writing an essay every day, and so educated her powers of thought instead of her powers of observation, which are far too keen already.'

'My dear,' she said, bringing forward once again the graces of her youth that had, according to Mr. Wright, turned the heads of all the marriageable and eligible men of Dublin in the days when she too was in her teens, 'I think you have now so much improved your colloquial English that these letters may be discontinued. You had better take a fortnight's holiday, and then, after the new year has fairly set in, we can consider the subjects upon which it will be most

to your mental advantage to write.'

In reply Miss Miles simply bowed, and, taking her manuscript, corrected those passages which Mrs. Wright had pencilled as being capable of improvement.

'You have amended your errors very quickly and well, said Mrs. Wright, glancing over the sheet and handing it back again.

Miss Miles, with a pleasant 'Thank you,' received the letter, and at once tore it into slips, and placed the morsels under the grate.

'My dear,' cried Mrs. Wright, 'what are you doing?'

'Only burning some useless paper,' answered Miss Miles quietly.

Mrs. Wright paused for a minute, then she remarked, 'I hope, Bella—I do hope—you have not a bad temper.'

'I hope not,' was the reply, 'I do not think I have. I only burnt this letter because I fancied—forgive me if I am wrong—you did not want my uncle to read it.'

'My child, you are very foolish,' said Mrs. Wright in her most matronly manner. 'I trust nothing ever occurs at Fisherton Rectory which I should care for the whole world knowing.'

'And if there were,' retorted Miss Miles, her cheeks aflame and her head erect, 'I trust you know such things would never be repeated by me. I have never mentioned even the merest trifle to my uncle I thought you and Mr. Wright might like me to keep secret. If I know little else, I know, at least, when to remain silent.' And then and there she burst into a passion of tears.

'Bella—Bella, what is the matter?' exclaimed Mrs. Wright. 'What have I said or done to cause you such grief?'

'Nothing—nothing,' replied the

girl for answer. 'Only sometimes I cannot forget. I cannot.'

'Forget what?' asked Mrs. Wright.

'Do not ask me. Nothing I can tell you,' was the answer. And Miss Miles left the room, leaving Mrs. Wright in a state of bewilderment impossible to describe.

'I have it,' at length decided that astute lady. 'Her mother or her father was mad, and she knows it. She has all the cleverness and secrecy of insanity, and the malady will break out some day in her. I must speak to Dion about this.'

But when she did speak to Dion, he only said, 'Pshaw! Selina, the girl has all her wits, believe me. There is a mystery, doubtless, but we were not sent into the world to solve it. Let us make what we can out of Mr. Irwin, and thank Heaven for the wind-fall, without troubling ourselves too much concerning the ins and outs of affairs that are no business of ours.'

CHAPTER XVI.

RECOUNTS HOW AN ENGLISHMAN
WAS TRICKED IN IRELAND.

COLONEL LESCHELLES, for whose benefit the spare bedroom of Fisherton Rectory—Miss Miles' bedroom, in short—had been duly prepared, as narrated by that young lady, was an old friend of the Wrights—so old a friend, indeed, that the Rector declared the date of his first acquaintance with the Colonel was enshrouded in the mists of memory.

This is a good way some people have of forgetting the number of years which could be counted since they first made the acquaintance of this distinguished statesman or that admirable millionaire. They

could tell to a day, I will warrant, when they first met poor Tom Styles, or Jack Oakes forced his company upon them; but it is really so long since they first knew Rothschild, and Baring, and the rest of the moneyed plutocracy, that the exact date has been rubbed by the mere action of time off Recollection's tablets.

It would not have required, however, any extraordinary amount of thought to enable Mr. Wright to state precisely the Christmas Eve on which he made Colonel Leschelles' acquaintance.

Had he chosen to do so, he could have told any inquirer the date, year, and hour when he set eyes for the first time on that gallant officer. He was at that period curate in a parish situated well away to the east of London, in the middle of the marshes, with no resident vicar, one resident squire, a scattered population of about a couple of hundred souls, an old church, a full graveyard—ague to the south, fever to the north, bronchitis to the east, and rheumatism and consumption pervading the west almost exclusively, and spreading to the other three quarters when inclination or business called one or both diseases thither.

'For eleven weary months,' to quote Mr. Wright's own words, 'I vegetated in that slough of despond, most part of the time wifeless and childless. Except in the summer, I preached to about half-a-dozen of a congregation; there was not an educated man in the parish but one, and he was an atheist. As for the squire, he had not an idea beyond horses, dogs, fat cattle, and good investments. He had plenty of money; but he spent as little as he could. He never entertained. During the whole time I had charge he never asked me to his house, or offered me a glass of wine when I called.

The stipend, however, was good, as well it might be, and the duty light; if it had been heavy, I could not have performed it. I kept my health wonderfully, and Selina and the children kept theirs at a distance. I lived at the vicarage, and the woman who was left in care of the furniture attended to my wants. Besides this woman, who was deaf, I never exchanged word with human being after my rounds were finished for the day, and the curtains were drawn and the shutters closed. Sometimes, when the flat marsh lands were covered deep in snow or lay under water, and the wind came howling up from the German Ocean across those dreary wilds, I have sat by the fire in the old vicar's study, and imagined how a man might hang himself, or take to drink, or go mad, living alone in such a spot.'

Even to such a spot, however, Christmas Eve came—such a Christmas Eve! The wind, after having blown for about three months from the east, as is the habit of the wind in those forlorn regions, suddenly changed to the south, and brought with it, on the twenty-fourth of December in that especial year of grace, such a fall of snow as was unparalleled in the memory of the oldest inhabitant, a certain Job Groom, who had, as man and boy, worked upon the farm and lands owned by Squire Olier and Squire Olier's forefathers sixty-five years.

There had been a very heavy fall of snow, so said Job, the night Master Samuel was born; and now there came a heavier fall, and Master Samuel, the Squire, was—quite in his prime, as it seemed to Job—dying; and, unless the weather changed greatly, Job did not see how he was ever to be buried. Job could remember that at the time of the heavy snow when Master Samuel was born, graves

could not be dug at all; and Job, sorry for his master's impending death, was still more sorry he should have selected such weather for flitting from this world to the next.

So Squire Olier lay dying. His house stood low even for that low-lying district; and he had drunk heavily for many years past, in order to banish ague, and perhaps also because he liked strong liquors. And the doctor, who came from the nearest town to attend him, said that he had drunk too much, and that brandy and hollands had between them signed his death-warrant.

Upon the other hand, the doctor said if he had not drunk so much he would probably not have lived so long. He made this remark to Mr. Wright while he and that gentleman were having something hot in the dining-room upon the especial Christmas Eve of which I am speaking, when Squire Olier was speeding to eternity with greater haste than he had ever ridden on his good horse Rochester back from hounds or market, with the sharp east wind cutting his head off, or the driving sleet beating in his eyes and blinding him.

'I shall not go just yet,' said the doctor, 'though I can be of no more use, I am afraid, still I may just as well wait for half an hour. Who succeeds, do you know?'

'It depends on his will,' answered the Curate. 'The place is his own, to bequeath to you or me, if he were so inclined. The heir he fixed on, however, I believe, offended him, and he has sent, I know, for I wrote the letter, to some man—an officer, not long returned from India—that I fancy he had half a notion of willing most of his property to. But the Colonel tarries; and if he had not tarried, I suppose our poor friend

has been in no fit state to execute a will for days past.'

They sat silent for a time over the fire in that dark wainscoted room. Without, the snow continued to fall softly; upstairs, the Squire lay insensible. In the kitchen, servants, house and farm, huddled together round the hearth, reading warnings in the blaze of the wood fire, and seeing winding-sheets in the guttering candles. At every sound they started; and when occasionally one of the two women attending on the dying Squire crept downstairs, they looked at her as if she had come from another world.

There was no mistress at the farm, there had never been in Squire Samuel's time, and the servants spoke in hushed tones of some cruel disappointment in early life which had kept the once-young master single, and changed the whole course and meaning of his life.

In the parlour, the doctor and clergyman touched on the same subject; and Mr. Wright said he understood the lady—dead and dust long before—had been a sister of this very Colonel Leschelles, and a cousin of Mr. Olier's.

'Though he has lived the life of a boor, he comes of a good family, I believe,' added the Curate; and he was about to enlarge upon this theme when the doctor said, 'Hush!' and rising, walked towards the door, which was opened at that moment by one of the watchers.

'Will you come upstairs, please, sir?' she asked. 'He is very bad.'

Thereupon doctor and clergyman proceeded to the sick chamber, where they found Squire Olier so bad that he never could be worse.

The doctor did what lay in his power to soothe him; but his power was literally *nil*.

'It is almost the last struggle,' he whispered to Mr. Wright. 'All will soon be over.'

And still the snow fell softly, and the graves in the distant churchyard were covered, like the dead, from sight; and Mr. Wright, with a great sense of pity for the human loneliness of the dying man, knelt by the bedside and prayed, till the doctor, touching his shoulder, said:

'He has gone, poor fellow! He is past any help of ours.'

At the same instant there was a peal at the front-door bell, immediately followed by a rush of cold air into the house and a sound of talking in the hall. Then, as Mr. Wright descended the staircase, a servant met him and announced that Colonel Leschelles had come.

Mr. Wright, re-entering the parlour, found standing before the fire a tall, thin man—military, unquestionably—elderly, presumably—a man who came to the point at once by asking, 'Am I in time?'

'He is dead!' answered the Curate; and for a minute not a word was uttered. Then the Colonel spoke:

'I received a letter written by a Mr. Wright——'

'I am Mr. Wright,' explained the Curate.

'But only late last night, as it has been following me from place to place,' continued the Colonel, acknowledging the information with a bow. 'I have been travelling ever since. I should like to have seen him alive once more. Poor Samuel! we were good friends many a long year ago.' And there ensued another pause, broken this time by Mr. Wright, who told the officer his cousin had been virtually dead for some days previously, and that no speed he could have made, even had the letter reached him in regular course, would have enabled him to arrive in time.

'I am glad to know that,' replied the other; 'for I should have liked to comply with his last request, if possible.'

At this juncture the doctor came in to tell Mr. Wright he was going, and to say he would inform Mr. Olier's solicitor of his client's death. Then the doctor inquired if it was Colonel Leschelles' intention to remain in the house.

'I suppose I must,' said the Colonel ruefully. 'If I were ever so much inclined to desert my post, I do not think, considering the road we have travelled, I should feel inclined to retrace it. I hired a conveyance to bring me here, and I suppose the driver can put up for the night. It is not weather in which to turn a dog out, or——'

'Anybody except a doctor,' finished the other. 'Doctors are supposed to be weatherproof; but if I mean to get home at all, I must be off now.'

'Better stay at the vicarage,' suggested Mr. Wright.

'Only wish I could,' was the reply; 'but my wife would be fancying all manner of evil; and, besides, some patient will be sure to want me. Patients always do fall ill on Church holidays and snowy nights; but take the Colonel home with you, Mr. Wright. He will be far better and more comfortable away from here. Take him with you.'

'Ay, that I will, if he is only willing to come,' said Mr. Wright, laying a persuasive hand on the officer's sleeve as the doctor left the room. 'Listen to me, Colonel; you will be miserable here, I know. The servants are upset; and if they were not, they would not be of much use to you. You can be of no use to our poor friend upstairs. Come with me to the vicarage, where I am, in the absence of my wife and children, leading a ha-

chelor life. You can be as much alone as you like. The house is warm, if it is nothing else. I can give you a snug bit of supper to-night, and cut you a slice out of as fine a turkey as ever came to table to-morrow. Say you will come. Upon my honour I shall be as glad of your company as I should of that of my own brother.'

Which, if the Colonel had known everything, would not have seemed a strong way of putting the matter. Nevertheless Mr. Wright was quite in earnest over his invitation. He would have killed a fatted calf for his guest's benefit, had such an animal been running loose about the vicarage straw-yard, rather than let his captive go.

Colonel Leschelles looked round the dark parlour; he surveyed the gloomy wainscot of the room, the heavy, old-fashioned haircloth-covered chairs, the worn sofa, the unsmuffed candles, the hearth strewn with wood-ashes, and thought of what an evening companionless in that house was likely to prove, with no living soul he could ask to relieve his loneliness downstairs, with the memory of the dead lying stiff and silent upstairs; and he decided in favour of the vicarage.

'You are very kind,' he said, speaking to Mr. Wright; 'and I will avail myself of your proffered hospitality; but first I should like to see it.'

'You would like to be alone, probably,' suggested Mr. Wright as he led the way upstairs.

'Yes, if you please,' was the answer. And so the two men who had parted in youth met again in age.

With the memories which thronged through Colonel Leschelles' mind, as he stood looking at the face no longer distorted with pain, over which the peace of

death was rapidly stealing, we have no concern. There was no remorse, at any rate, in the officer's heart. The quarrel, in whatever cause it may have originated, was not of his seeking, and at any time he would have made it up. Further, he had obeyed his cousin's request the moment he received his message, and he had been ready, knowing nothing of the dead man's pecuniary intentions towards himself, to hold out the right hand of fellowship, and tell his kinsman that in his heart there rankled no bitterness, no feeling, save good-will and charity.

All too late, however, thought the Colonel, as he stood regarding the changed face of the cousin who had loved his sister; and it was consequently a grave man and a depressed who, half an hour later, apologized to Mr. Wright for having detained him for so long a time, and signified his readiness to accompany the Curate home.

That night Mr. Wright, depressed and out of sorts himself, let his visitor alone. He gave him good cheer, it is true; but he did not enter into much conversation. What talk they had was about the late Squire and his relatives, and the life he had led, and the life he might have led; and as neither found any one of those topics entertaining, they bade each other good-night, and went to bed early.

Next morning both arose in better spirits, and looked out over a white world glittering and sparkling under the beams of a winter sun.

'The finest Christmas Day I can ever remember,' said Mr. Wright, rubbing his hands and looking at the ruddy glow of the fire, and listening contentedly to the bubbling of the urn. 'The labourers

from the farm were at work by day-break, and have cut a road to the church; so we may get something of a congregation, after all. Will you come with me, or keep at home beside the fire?"

The Colonel elected to go with Mr. Wright, who picked out a very good sermon from a pile already yellow with age, and delivered it admirably. He touched very feelingly upon the death that had taken place so recently, and though he said little concerning the late Squire, still he said as much as it was possible for any one to say in his praise.

After service was over, Mr. Wright and his visitor returned to the vicarage, where, in due time, that turkey spoken of in commendatory terms, was placed smoking on the board.

'You see your dinner?' remarked Mr. Wright. And the Colonel was fain to remark he saw a very good dinner indeed, which was rendered none the worse by the addition of some capital punch, in the brewing of which Mr. Wright was a proficient. The punchbowl was not produced till the old cook had removed the remains of the turkey and disappeared with the almost untasted pudding. Then Mr. Wright produced 'his materials,' and compounded a beverage which the Colonel declared to be 'perfect,' and which he sipped, looking at the upheaped fire and listening to Mr. Wright's talk.

In those days the Curate could talk. Debt had not then been sitting upon him for so long a time, as was the case at Fisherton. Children had come and gone; but his mental elasticity was almost as great as ever. Duns had been pressing, and Selina's health was often delicate, but the buoyancy of his youth still remained, and the evil days which came upon him at last, of regarding all men

as mere possible chances from which to borrow money had not yet arrived.

So Mr. Wright, who was perhaps always a little more loquacious to any chance guest, or at any hospitable table, when Selina and the dear children were absent, and he living *en garçon*, unfolded his experience budget for Colonel Leschelles' benefit.

He wanted to rouse the officer from his depression, and he did it. He wished to see him laugh, or, if that were impossible, smile; and he made him both laugh and smile.

He told him stories of Dublin life, and of his own life at Trinity—then so merry and witty a college—recited profane anecdotes concerning bishops and archbishops; told how the Church in Ireland had been neglected, and expressed his own conviction that it was hard to feel energetic in a country where nineteen-twentieths of the population were either Presbyterians or Roman Catholics; had his fling at the absentee clergy, who he said were even worse than the absentee landlords; citing, as an example, the case of a rector, who, starting in the morning with the bishop of the diocese on a visit to his parish, drove about till evening without finding it, gravely assuring his lordship, when compelled to give up the search, he had been 'once there, and was quite astonished he could not remember the way to it again.'

'And yet there was a considerable amount of Christian feeling at that time among the various denominations,' continued Mr. Wright, 'which I doubt does not prevail now.'

'No dinner-party then was complete without the priest, and good stories they gave, never fear, in return for their entertainment. No men were such story-tellers as

they. Why, every gentleman's house was open to the priests, who were right jolly fellows, until after Catholic Emancipation; and well-educated and gentlemanly too, many of them, which is more than could be said nowadays. If the dissenting ministers were not asked to mix freely with the landed gentry, it was only because in country districts many of them had come from the plough, and because the better educated and those born in town were just like Samson's foxes, running a-muck against Churchmen and Romanists alike.

'Still, even between the Presbyterians and the Church people—the *Regium donum* and the tithes, as we used to dub them—a kindly feeling sometimes prevailed. I remember once, when I was a boy, staying with some relatives of mine in the north. They were Presbyterians, stiff-necked as the perverse generation, and bigoted as Mussulmen, so, of course, I had to go to "meeting" with them, and stand out those interminable prayers, and sit while psalms fifty verses long were sung in unison through their noses, and listen to sermons which they said were full of pith, but which seemed to me full only of repetitions.

'We used to muster a goodly company, for there was only one Roman Catholic family in the parish, and not more than fifty Church people. All the women went to meeting with their Bibles wrapped round in unfolded pocket-handkerchiefs, and all the men wore black clothes about three sizes too large for them.

'The men and the women walked in separate detachments. Four or so of one sex walked together, taking up the entire side-walk, and sometimes the whole road, and then came four or less of the other sex walking by themselves.

'They were very strict in all the relations of life, and part of their religion was to keep the footpath against all comers.

'The clergyman of the parish was of course non-resident. He lived many miles distant, near a pleasant town, where he had a nice house, good society, and a fine library.

'It is said that a matter-of-fact bishop once wrote to him to know whether he considered his books or the souls of his flock of the most importance, to which he silyly replied :

"I apprehend, my lord, there can be no doubt about the matter. My books, of course."

'He and his clerk rode over the hills to perform one service on Sundays, that is, unless the day happened to be very wet indeed, in which case, after waiting for half an hour, the congregation quietly dispersed, some going to "meeting," others home, and those who had friends pretty well to do near at hand accepting invitations to "take an air of the fire" and a drop of something to keep the cold out.

'By all ranks the rector was greatly liked. When he did come among his people, he was pleasant to them, and to the dissenters and the one Roman Catholic family. He had a royal memory, and never made mistakes about names. He was ready with a joke for the mothers, for a kind word with the men, with a sly compliment for the girls, and pats on the head, and sometimes halfpence, for the curly-pated, bare-footed, straight-limbed children disporting themselves in the village horse-pond and the familiar gutters. True, the minister often had a rap at the clergyman of the Established Church for taking money and doing no work, but his people did not attach much importance to

these remarks. Paying for their sittings, being asked to contribute to collections, being called upon for money when their children had to be baptized or themselves married, seemed much harder to them than the payment of tithes, which usually came out of their landlords' pockets.

'At all times the rector was willing to christen for nothing, marry for nothing, ay, and often as not to give the newly-wedded a trifle with which to begin house-keeping; and so, as I have said, he was popular, more especially as it was well known he "could take his glass just like one of themselves."

'To a parish some few miles distant had come a clergyman of quite another stamp. An Englishman with an English wife, both of whom were cordially hated. He, for wanting to make converts; she, for wishing the people to keep themselves and their houses clean. He gave blankets and tracts to the Roman Catholics, and their priest told them to burn the tracts and keep the blankets, adding, "God knows, poor souls! this weather you have need of them."

'He gave straw bonnets and cotton frocks to the Presbyterian children, and was astonished to find they donned those articles of attire only in order to attend the Sunday-schools attached to their own meeting-house.

'He preached alternate Sundays against the Roman Catholics and the dissenters, and was not sparing upon those of his own cloth who folded their hands in idleness and said, "Peace when there was no peace."

'This was the man who stood waiting for the rector of our parish one stormy winter's morning, and who, as the old clerical cob came in sight, advanced to meet his friend.

"How do, ——?" he began. "My steeple was blown down last night, and as we could not possibly have any service, I thought I would come over and preach for you."

"I am sure I am greatly obliged to you," answered our rector. In telling the story afterwards, which he did at many a dinner-table, he said he would as soon have seen the gentleman with a cloven hoof as the man who greeted him. Nay, I am wrong, he said he would rather have seen *Il Diavolo*; but, however, he felt he must put a good face on the matter, and so he got down off his cob, and the clerk dismounted from his pony, and they all went into the vestry together, where the Englishman proceeded to robe himself decorously, while our rector flung on his surplice, as was his fashion, anyhow.

"You don't get much of a congregation here, I suppose?" remarked the stranger.

"Oh! pretty well; all things considered, I cannot complain."

"There don't seem many here yet," said the Englishman, peeping through the chinks of the vestry door.

"We always give them a few minutes' grace," observed the rector; "and I dare say they will be late such a boisterous morning as this."

'Having made which excuse, he passed out into the churchyard and accosted a member of the constabulary force who chanced at that moment to be passing the vestry window.

"Mr. Jeckey," says he, "I am in an awful fix. Here's the Rev. Mr. —— come to spy out the nakedness of the land. If Mr. Cathers won't help me, I am disgraced for ever. Just run round to the meeting-house and tell Mr. Cathers if he'll lend me his congregation I'll be eternally obliged to him."

'Like an arrow from the bow sped Mr. Jeckey on his errand. The Presbyterian service had begun before he reached the meeting-house; indeed, it had proceeded so far that Mr. Cathers had finished his extempore prayer and given out the psalm, which we were all singing as well as we knew how.

'But never recked Mr. Jeckey of that. Down the aisle he tramped unheeding, not a man stirring to stop his progress. Up the pulpit steps he strode, and whispered the position in Mr. Cathers' ear.

'We were all dying of curiosity, but still we sang on—sang our fiercest, till Mr. Cathers, having taken the sense of Mr. Jeckey's communication into his brain, raised one hand, in order to silence our voices and obtain attention for himself.

"My friends," he said, "our worthy rector is in a serious strait. You all know, or have heard, of the English clergyman who is disturbing the peace of —. Without message or notice of any kind he has come this morning to take the church duty here, and, as a personal favour, our rector asks you all to go and listen to his sermon. If you will do so, I shall feel obliged. In any case, there will be no service here, as I mean to go and sit under him for this once myself."

'So,' proceeded Mr. Wright, 'we all rose in a body and repaired to church, the minister heading us; and Mr. — looked upon such a congregation as had never gladdened his eyes in his own parish. The pews were packed, the aisles were full, the clerk could not beg, borrow, or steal prayer-books sufficient for one in six; but the dissenters did their best. They watched what the others

did, and knelt at the right places, and got up not often at the wrong. If they sat during the singing when they should have stood, that was nothing unusual even among Church people; and I am bound to say they listened to Mr. — consigning the Roman Catholics to the lowest depths and describing the iniquities of the Scarlet Lady with an appreciative ear.

'When Mr. — took off his gown, he did it with the air of a man who feels he looks like a dog with his tail between his legs.

"I had no idea you had such a congregation," he said to our rector.

"It was larger than usual to-day," said the rector modestly. "I suppose the news of your coming had got wind."

'And something else got wind too,' finished Mr. Wright. 'It was too good a story to be kept quiet, telling as it did as much against the Englishman as our rector.

'Besides, our rector felt it ought not to be lost. He gave a supper on the strength of it to all the parish, and was better liked than ever afterwards.

'Moreover, he told the story at various dinner-parties, and the laugh was so loud and so long against — that he exchanged his living with a man who has since gone over bodily to Rome, and been succeeded by a vicar of moderate views, who is the happy father of nine daughters.

'No straw bonnets or cotton frocks are given away in the parish now I believe, and the pigs live in the cottagers' houses, and the children in the gutters outside the houses without let or hindrance from the wife of any one, lay or clerical.'

(To be continued.)

SOME OF THE DIFFICULTIES OF DRAMATIC LITERATURE.

— 'the poetic worth of a piece they were never heard to speak of, or to judge of, right or wrong; their continual question was simply, 'How much will it *bring*? Is it a stock piece? How long will it run? How often, think you, it may be played?' — *Wilhelm Meister's Apprenticeship*. THOMAS CARLYLE's translation.

WHY in this age of culture—this age of competitive examinations—this age of high-pressure intellectuality and cram-worship, are the theatrical amusements of the day so unintellectual? A curious question, and, more curious still, a question which wise men have scarcely cared to ask, so little does the stage enter into the ordinary ken of intellectual persons.

Ought we indeed to use the dignified term 'literature' in reference to such a subject? It is stated that those who dine at the annual dinner of the Royal Literary Fund never hear a single word spoken in reference to the drama; other branches of literature are duly recognised, but the drama is treated as an outcast sister in this land of the Elizabethan dramatists; so perhaps we ought to tender an apology for even using the term 'dramatic literature.' But at least, with regard to the stage, it is passing strange that intellectual persons generally, and particularly persons who devote their minds to the study of social topics, should care so little for that mighty power which, for good or evil, for elevation or degradation, ministers to the amusement of large masses of the community as well in London as in provincial towns.

'But is the stage unintellectual?' Please to prove your assertion.

Well, good reader, be kind enough to run your eye down the dramatic column of the 'Times' and point out the number of theatres which would be likely to attract persons of intellect, say

men of science, barristers, lawyers, doctors, students, young men engaged in intellectual pursuits—say how many of the advertised amusements would be in harmony with, or possess interest for hard-thinking brains.*

Of course the religious world ignores the stage altogether; religious people preach against it, denounce it, despise stage players, and the protest ends in its barrenness: vilified *ad libitum*, the stage remains. Does it count for nothing to be able to attract hundreds night after night—thousands of the rough stuff of those northern cities—thousands who are deaf to church bell or chapel preacher, to the influences of parson or minister—thousands who crowd in to be enthralled by the sorrows of Leah or the tribulations of Mary Warner? Is the power which a woman like Miss Bateman exercises to a moral end, not one day a week, but six evenings out of seven, a thing for religious people to despise or ig-

* This article was written at the commencement of the dark dramatic season 1874-5; since then 'Hamlet' has become a great and well-deserved success, thanks being due, not only to Mr. Irving's great ability, but also to Mr. Bateman's skill as a manager, in *gradually* developing the popular interest felt in Mr. Irving's acting, and thus rendering 'Hamlet' a possibility. 'The Merry Wives of Windsor' was produced at the Gaiety shortly before Christmas; but with regard to *modern* work, up to the middle of January nothing with any claim to intellectual power has been produced, with the exception of Mr. W. S. Gilbert's charming sketch, so admirably created by Mrs. Bancroft.

nore? Not alone is Mr. Spurgeon's Tabernacle wonderful, or Canon Liddon's Sunday afternoon congregation at St. Paul's, and they at least, though from widely different sides and in different degrees, address persons within the intellectual pale; but that gallery of Birmingham roughs, and the power of a woman to hold it in her thrall by a story of long-enduring love and fortitude, or a story of bitter repentance and final redemption and pardon through self-sacrifice—this also is worth a little thought. Of course religious people are hopeless, through deep-seated historic prejudice; but the subject might possibly be worthy of consideration by a social science congress. The amusement of the people is certainly worthy of thought. Amusement may mean education in good or evil.

'Come, come! what's all this twaddle about intellectuality and moral purpose!' exclaims a manager. 'I'm bound to give what people will take; it's a mere matter of pence and pounds to me. Opera bouffe is just now the go; but it's all one as far as I'm concerned. Bless you, my boy, I've no feelings one way or another; I'd give 'em anything they liked—a Greek tragedy in Greek with a chorus of modern Greeks from Manchester, if I thought they'd come to the scratch, only they wouldn't. Seriously, though, old fellow, I don't believe intellectual persons, as you call them, care a button for intellectual entertainments. People thinking hard all day don't want to think in the evening—it stands to reason they either want to go to sleep or be amused without thought. Depend upon it *that* class wouldn't care for your psychological drama; they've been puzzling their brains all day, and they don't want to be asked social enigmas at night. And besides,' and

this said with a knowing wink, 'just remember the story of Faust. He was a very intellectual person, and all that style of thing, wasn't he? Well, we know the end of Faust's intellectuality. No, no, my boy; opera bouffe and a piquant ballet; none of your esthetics and poetry of motion, but good, downright corporeal dancing; depend upon it that's the sort to catch your intellectual people.'

* * * * *

'Just like the stupidity of managers,' cries an intellectual person, say a hard-worked physician or barrister. 'I want a little relaxation; I'm wearied with my own ideas—my own thoughts—I want to replace those thoughts for a short time with other thoughts and ideas, but they must be thoughts strong enough to cast out the thoughts which absorb my mind. Plague upon it! I suppose it's the fault of the dramatists. Why the deuce can't they screw themselves up to the intellectual standard of the age?—haven't they got brains enough to write out these eternal ballets, and write over those melancholy moving burlesques? Surely English life is not so utterly barren of incidents that it can't afford subjects for the stage! Surely there must be social conditions which, treated from an English standpoint, and with due regard to English feelings, would interest the brains of London as the *drame intime* of France interests the brains of Paris. We have been charmed at the Prince of Wales Theatre by a clever rendering of every-day English life—charmed, and deeply thankful as well to author as to management; but surely there must exist an abnormal as well as a normal condition of the feelings and passions in English existence—English social life must have its own special trials

and temptations. Haven't our dramatists eyes to see these things, and brains enough to embody them on the stage? Does no temptation exist for Englishmen and Englishwomen? Is temptation solely reserved for the wicked inhabitants of Paris?"

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'I beg your pardon, sir, for interrupting; but I assert boldly that there is no such thing as temptation in English domestic life. I'm the father of a family of seven daughters—three of 'em married, bless 'em! I know what you're driving at; I repeat, there is no such thing as temptation in England. Love, and plaguey troublesome it is anyhow, is systematically conducted in this country, upon the most irreproachable and moral principles. Don't talk to me about a Divorce Court; I tell you the whole thing is utterly un-English. I don't care twopence for newspaper reports and judicial statistics; I say I don't choose to recognise the existence of a Divorce Court; call me a fool or a philistine, or an ostrich with its head buried in the sand, I'd rather be all three than recognise immorality in any form. The French are bad enough, I know; this is England, thank Heaven, and England's glory, under Providence, is its morality. If I ever go to the play—I hate the whole thing, the dress-circle is always so lamentably uncomfortable—I only go for the sake of the girls. Dramatic plots must be strictly limited to those ideas of propriety with which a young lady of seventeen ought to be imbued. Her ideas—or, at least, the ideas she *ought* to have, I know they get hold of all sorts of novels—I say that the ideas of life which are proper to a girl of seventeen ought to govern, and must and shall govern, the dramatists of England, or neither I nor the girls

go any more to the theatre, mind that. Analysis of the passions and feelings? fiddlesticks! this is the sort of plot English dramatists must stick to if they want me to countenance their plays: a young gentleman in love with a young lady—as many obstacles to their union as you like, cascades, shipwrecks, burning houses, avalanches—happy marriage in the last act, and the curtain drops on domestic felicity ever after: that's what I call a decent, respectable family plot, and those are my maxims as a family man.'

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'And very wholesome maxims too, sir. I beg leave to state that I am the dramatic critic of a newspaper with an immense circulation among the middle classes. I venture to say with just pride that I have constantly reprobated every English drama which could possibly offend the limited ideas, or the *theoretically* limited ideas, of a young lady of the age you mention. I frankly confess I have been somewhat perplexed with certain translations of French dramas which have, perhaps unfortunately, slipped through the licenser's fingers; for instance, "*Nos Intimes*," with its spirited love scene, certainly did bother me; but you must remember that the tone and moods of the mind vary from time to time as to what is exactly moral and what isn't, just as Professor Tyndall's mind varies with regard to materialism; and then you see Sardou's comedy is intensely clever, and it won't do to be always prudish: as Mr. Surface remarks, very justly, one can't always be an absolute Joseph. Besides, after all, "*Nos Intimes*" teaches a moral to those immoral French; and further than this, English people are too moral to understand its immorality—if indeed it be immoral, which I don't allow, always

looking at it from a French point of view; though of course everybody must admit that the love scene of act four is rather free; still, taking the play as a whole, I think it teaches a high moral lesson. I hope you understand the distinctions I have drawn between a so-called immoral French play and an immoral English play; the thing is perfectly clear to any one of common apprehension, though perhaps my explanation has not been quite as clear as I could wish, but unfortunately one can't always explain one's thoughts in a thoroughly lucid manner; one's critiques, you see, are not published side by side. At any rate, I always have enforced, and always will enforce, the strictest moral treatment upon English dramatic authors.

'You ask my opinion, as a moral censor, with regard to the present style of costume in ballets and burlesques? Do I think it a moral exhibition for young people? You allude, of course, to that vexed question of the minimum—we are really so accustomed to the minimum—*cela va sans dire*; perhaps it's better not to mention such things to ears polite. Let us shut our eyes; any protest on our part would cause people to open their eyes; this would be most dangerous to morality. I hope you follow my argument. Semi-nudity or not, let our *own* plays be always goody goody, and the sun of England's morality will never set in the dark ocean of social depravity.'

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'I should just like to have a word about plays. I'm an old playgoer, mind you; I can remember Mrs. Siddons, and John Kemble, and Kean, and Young, and lots more to boot. I'm not going to touch the moral question. I'm glad to say my morals and my digestion are both of the robust

order; nothing of the morbid, sickly valetudinarian about me, either morally or physically. One thing I'll just say: I can't for the life of me see how bricks are to be made without straw, and I don't at all see why English dramatists are to be shackled while English novelists are allowed to go free. All I want to do is to point out the reason why plays in the present day are so indifferent. I am persuaded the fault lies with the authors, confound 'em; they've got an abominable habit of always writing for one actor or one actress. Why, bless me, the plays in my time used to be written with at least a dozen good characters: all an author seems to care about nowadays is to write a play to suit this actor or that actress, without one bit of thought or care for the due and full rendering of the theme he has on hand. Can anything be more erroneous, or more degrading to the drama in an artistic point of view? For my part, I can't understand why actors put up with this sort of thing. Surely an actor of common sense, an actor possessing the smallest knowledge of the principles of dramatic effect, must feel that the strength of his own part is evolved from antagonism with other strong parts—strength from strength, not strength from weakness. If I were an actor, I should say to an author, Give me something strong to play against—flesh and blood creations, which are capable of making an impression on the audience, not mere dummies which go for naught; and, mark me, I'd make my author do it, or *I'd throw up the part*: every actor has a right to do that, rather than compromise his art. Speaking as a mere outsider, it seems to me a great pity that actors and actresses are not more accustomed to vindicate the dignity of their profession

by taking this decisive step. Believe me, the evil is easily cured: just let artistes take the thing in hand, show a little resolution on the subject, and authors will be forced back into the sound groove of dramatic composition. The thing is so obviously against the interest of the actor, that I haven't a doubt the fault rests entirely with the dramatist—undue haste in construction, poverty of conception. I say, let the dramatist be mindful of his high calling, let him write with singleness of purpose, with true devotion to art, forgetting all else, and the actor will be rewarded with a play worth acting, and the public with a play worth seeing.'

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'Dear Mr. Dramatic Author, I can't say how pleased I am with your play, "Obardo the Oblivious." It really is so original and fresh; the dialogue, too, is admirable; the part of the heroine is just the rôle I should like to create; it would suit me admirably, and I am certain I should create a perfect *furor* in the part; the other characters are so good, so powerfully drawn, so excessively interesting; indeed the whole play is thoroughly artistic in conception and treatment. I can assure you it isn't very often one has the treat of reading a work so strongly dramatic, and at the same time possessing such high literary merit. I can only regret, and I do so most sincerely, that the play is entirely unadapted for my purposes. The part of the hero is almost as powerful as that of the heroine. I need scarcely say how much I should rejoice in having such a fine part to play against; but the part must be finely played, or the whole effect would be lost. You are aware that I require a play for the provinces; it would never do for me to trust your hero to the

leading man of stock provincial companies, as such companies are now constituted: I am sure you would never wish the play, either for my sake or your own, to run such a risk. Then again, how could I hope to cast the other parts even decently? The play would be just the thing for a thoroughly organized London company, and of course you would have no difficulty on that score. I only wish I could afford to engage a company for its production; but this is impossible. To be thoroughly frank with you, I have at last, after hard and earnest work, attained the position of a star; I have to make my money as best I may, and I could not in any event burden my expenses with the salary of an actor of sufficient talent to play your hero. I should esteem it a favour if you would write me a powerful play, with a very few characters, and those as little prominent as possible. Such, alas! is the system nowadays; I regret it as much for your sake as my own, but both author and artiste must submit to the inevitable.'

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'My dear boy, what the deuce was the use of your sending me such a play as "Obardo the Oblivious"? Are you oblivious of the fact that *feminine* power rules the roast at our theatre? Madam has read the play, says it's a very good play, but supposes I want it for some leading gentleman, the woman's part being literally nowhere. Just send me a play with a leading woman's part in it, and I'll talk to you.'

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'Dear sir, I beg to return you the MS. of "Obardo the Oblivious." Our star has read it carefully; he assures me that he thinks very highly of it. Had he been a *woman* instead of being a man, nothing would have given him greater

pleasure than to play the part of the heroine. Of course I can't open my mouth. Haven't you got anything on hand with a strong man's part that would suit our house?

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'You ask me to state frankly what I think of "Obardo," and I shall take you at your word. It's a very fairly effective play. I rather fancy I have seen several of the best situations before, either here or in France; anyhow that's better than being original; an audience never can make head or tail of an original play, nor, for the matter of that, can the critics either. An original play worries everybody; stick to the old lines, that's your only chance. It just occurs to me, wouldn't it be worth trying our great "National Temple of the Drama?" By-the-by, old boy, your blank verse isn't very topping; odd bits that won't stick in anyhow, like the tiger's tail in the "Tale of a Tub." However, that wouldn't stand in the way of the play being accepted. Of course you'd have to whip in a couple of ballets, a procession or so, and a battle if possible: a man with a thorough knowledge of dramatic craft can always manage to insert things of that sort in any play. Come, come, don't be hoity-toity and snort indignantly, there's nothing derogatory to literature in ballets and processions. Of course high-art critics affect to deplore the degradation of our national drama; bosh! things now are just as they were in the days of Edmund Kean: anybody who really knows anything about the history of the drama will tell you that they always trusted in those days to *spectacle*, and live elephants, and horses to pull up their houses; it's true we haven't got Edmund Kean nowadays, but that's the only difference.'

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'My dear, foolish friend, why the deuce have you been wasting your time in writing such a play as "Obardo"? How on earth could you expect a manager to produce such a thing? Bless you, managers know their business better than that! Why, you positively haven't got one bit of low comedy from beginning to end!—it's true I don't see how low comedy could be artistically introduced into the serious subject you have treated, and that's just the reason you shouldn't have treated such a subject. The mischief of it is, you've been trying to write *up*, filling your head with French notions about unity of action, artistic treatment, deftness of construction: you must try to write *down* to the best of your ability. My dear, innocent friend, people don't go to the theatre to see how well an author has written a play; they go to be amused, and provided they are amused, they don't care one button about constructive skill: people never read English plays, it's only in France that plays are read. Is it worth while to bother your brains for the sake of pleasing half-a-dozen critics, and a dozen old playgoers in the pit? Your subject is certainly very interesting; take my advice, pitchfork some strong comic relief *any how* into the play; a little rough and ready handling will mend matters directly. Take the MS. to pieces, after every page of serious writing, insert a page of good broad fun—never mind coherence and, by Jove, if "Obardo" isn't the biggest go we've had for years, I'll forfeit my reputation. Old jokes, remember! new jokes bother people by making them think, and making people think is a deadly sin in a dramatist. By-the-by, there's just one rock ahead: don't let your comic woman run your serious woman too close, or your play

won't be accepted at a theatre where the leading lady plays the high falutin parts. It would indeed be prudent if you could manage to combine the comic vein with the serious in the heroine's rôle; the play would then be a safe card at any theatre where a woman has the lead.'

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'What an ass a man must be to write a play! If I write a novel—and I've written a score of novels with very decent success and thoroughly good pecuniary result—I go to a publisher, and he says yes or no. If he says 'yes,' the thing is done and the book published; but a manager's 'yes' is contingent upon a dozen other 'yesses,' a dozen conflicting interests; and perhaps even the 'no' of a third-rate actor may throw the whole affair to the winds. Hang me, if I ever write another play. Let those who love the sport fish in troubled waters; let any one who likes pirate my ideas; trademarks are sacred in this country, and so is game: land and commerce hold their own in parliament, but, with respect to imaginative literature, men's thoughts are free gifts, like air and sunlight. Glorious principle of communistic freedom, for those who don't create the ideas. At any rate I am pretty well sure of being a dramatic author *at second hand*, and that will save a world of trouble; I shall *pay* for my private box, and see *some one else* bow from the stage, for such is the law of England.'

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Gently, dear Mr. Dramatic Author; be calm, I beg; and you Mr. Playgoer, and you also Mr. Critic, let us review the situation in a dispassionate manner; let us endeavour to stick to the real and the possible. Let us first frankly acknowledge, what every person

mixing in ordinary society has been taught by experience, that there exists in this country a large mass of intellectual persons who systematically do *not* go to the theatre, people of liberal and artistic tastes, of high culture, of imaginative power; these persons, as a rule, are entirely out of the habit of entering a playhouse; they have lost all interest in the drama, they have given up all hope of the drama, and they are never even at the pains of reading dramatic criticisms. The drama, as a rule, does not enter into the *life* of intellectual people, and this as much in the provinces as in London; thus the drama loses as well the elevating influence as the *pecuniary* support of this important class.

In considering this condition of affairs, of course it is easy enough to throw stones all round, to abuse authors, managers, actors, critics, in a wholesale manner; for instance, 'There are no dramatic authors nowadays!' 'Where are your poetic dramatists?' Only let a manager be assured of an intellectual *clientèle*, and there are plenty of men ready to afford you plays: Mr. Wills, whose 'Charles I.' was rendered a success by the spell which Mr. Irving exercises over his audience; Mr. Herman Merivale, who has won his spurs by a poetical failure, that 'White Pilgrim,' the failure of a dozen nights, a failure crowned with laurel and more worthy of honour than many triumphs which have crammed houses night after night; and plays, too, might be hoped from an author of approved poetic power and thorough stage knowledge, whose pen is now denied to the stage, Mr. Theodore Martin; and others too, but the catalogue must not be wearisome. Those who know him best, best know the dramatic power and

skill of Mr. Tom Taylor, his thorough knowledge and vivid appreciation of men and manners; and not last among eminent names, Mr. William S. Gilbert, with his rich gift of quaint imagination and caustic satire. Think, too, of the many plays which Mr. Boucicault, with his consummate talent, would never have written for a high-class audience. Let these men be told to write at their best, unshackled by the chains of a star system—to write for an audience of the *Français* stamp—to deal boldly with their poetic fancies—to deal freely with the problems of English life and English society, of human passion and human sorrow—to fling abroad the fine, keen lance of satire, knowing full well that the blow struck will be palpable to their audience; and be well assured you will get plays which will afford stuff enough for the brains of intellectual men and women; plays which will dwell awhile in the mind and not be forgotten on the threshold of the theatre; plays which will be worth *reading* as they read plays in France.

But your actors, where are they? Ay, there's the rub! Actors ought to be so thoroughly artistic; they ought to be ready to forego all desire of paltry gain, all thought of personal aggrandisement, for the pure love of their beautiful art; they ought to soar far above the regions of solid pudding, living a life of sublime disinterestedness. Alas! actors are very like other people—artistic and otherwise—working, as other men and women work, for their daily bread. Well, bread first; but after that do not suppose there are not scores of artistes full of ardent ambition and burning aspirations; do not suppose that all actors and actresses are content with a careless exercise of their powers; but remember they can only give you

what you ask. If you only care for, and can only understand, rough, strong acting, full of broad, palpable hits; rough, strong, palpable acting they must give; but if you desire all the delicate varieties of light and shade, if you desire subtle thought revealed by subtle action, there is material enough on the stage to answer that demand to the full. Actors are made or marred by their audience. If you *will* have a high standard, you can get it; but if you are pleased and contented with a low standard, be sure you will get far more than you have bargained for. With regard to the common cry that actors of eminence are selfishly unwilling to contribute to a perfect *ensemble* by playing secondary parts, we must in justice remember that in these days a theatrical success involves a six months unbroken performance of an inferior part, instead of a weekly bill of varied parts, leading or secondary, affording fair chances to all the members of a company. The 'long run' is, indeed, almost as fatal to art as the star system.

For the present, at least, be it remembered that the elevation of the stage depends on the artiste rather than the author. The only chance of success for a play of high analytical or poetic merit rests on the popularity of the artiste: the star system alone can restore what the star system has destroyed. The author may write his *best*, but he will write in vain unless the *popularity* of the artiste is powerful enough to carry the *dead weight* of literary merit. Of course, if an author be content to keep within the shallows, avoiding all delineation of deep tragic passion, and confine himself to such sentimental and sympathetic interests as lie within the limits of modern feeling and experience, mingling the sentimental largely

with comic relief—or even, possibly, a strong sympathetic interest by itself—his play, always supposing it to be effectively treated, may, with fair ‘all-round’ acting, stand on its own merits; but if he venture into deep waters, let him cling to his artiste like a drowning man. Alas! some triumphs won under the star system are not without heavy alloy in a literary point of view. Strange consolation for an accomplished and justly popular author, not only that the most popular of his many successes, ‘Our American Cousin,’ should be the least worthy of his plays, but that this very play should be destined to drive away comedy from the theatre which has witnessed so many of the honourable triumphs of his able pen!

Well, on the one side stands the possibility of excellent work both from author and artiste; on the other side, divided by a wide gulf of indifference, stands the intellectuality of the country. How can Mahomet be brought to the mountain? how can the mountain be conveyed to Mahomet? What is the remedy? How is the bridge to be built? Charming occupation for the inventive faculties! By what process can this intellectuality be aroused from its sinful apathy, and taught the disgrace, not to say the deep social error, of ignoring and forsaking the stage of a country so rich in dramatic literature, so rich in glorious histrionic traditions? Good *may* come by freely stating the difficulty and calling attention to the subject. No harm, however, in paying a visit to Utopia. Come, let us put faith in a mission; let us go forth into the highways and byways of intellect and culture—say, a mission to men of science—tracts distributed at the doors of the Royal Institution, tracts setting forth the terrible conse-

quences of neglecting the cultivation of the imaginative powers—the warping and onesidedness of brain thereby resulting. A mission to scholars and men of culture—tracts setting forth the scandal of neglecting Shakespeare in the land of his birth—the fallacy of forgetting that the best commentary on the text of a play is to be found in *acting* the text—that a play is not a thing of printed words but of flesh and blood—that through flesh and blood will be revealed the dramatist’s deepest meaning, and, may be, some deeper meaning beyond the dramatist’s own ken. A mission to philanthropists, members of social science congresses and the like, showing the error, not to say the danger, of neglecting the amusements of the people, the moral advantage of striving to raise the condition of the most popular of all popular recreations.

It is more than possible these missionaries would preach in vain—the super-fastidious would retire with increased contempt into their super-fastidiousness—yet haply the good seed might take root here and there, a few converts, might be made, and these converts, in their desire to atone for past sins of omission, would probably select some manager or managers who appeared to be doing the best in their power to elevate the stage—for special instance, a manager following the course of Mr. Bateman—and accepting the *intention* rather than the present result, they would, by *systematically patronising these managers*, so strengthen their hands that the good path could be pursued with greater speed and confidence. Other converts would gradually be added to this noble and devoted band; rich converts, possibly, who might, after a certain probation, be reasonably expected to take as much interest in

the stage and dramatic literature as many rich folks now take in the profound subtlety and 'soul-whispered' loveliness of ceramic art. Managers would thus be enabled to trust to the merit of the play and its *perfect* performance instead of the star system, and these wealthy patrons by *subscribing* to a theatre would enable, nay oblige, the manager to *vary* his entertainment, to the great advantage of art and artiste; and so, in the process of ages, a theatre or theatres might be evolved which would offer worthy recreation to the best intellects in the land; and this, too, without counting upon that wild improbability, a Government subsidy, with its contingent chances of jobbery, and jealousy, and maladministration. Furthermore, this elevation of dramatic art would no doubt have its due effect on dramatic criticism; no longer, as for the most part at present, a cut-and-dried skeleton story of the plot, conveying little or no real idea of the play, with praise or blame administered *ex cathedra*, and erring, be it said, for the most part on the golden side of praise and kindly feeling towards author and artiste; but a mature and well-pondered criticism of the salient idea of the

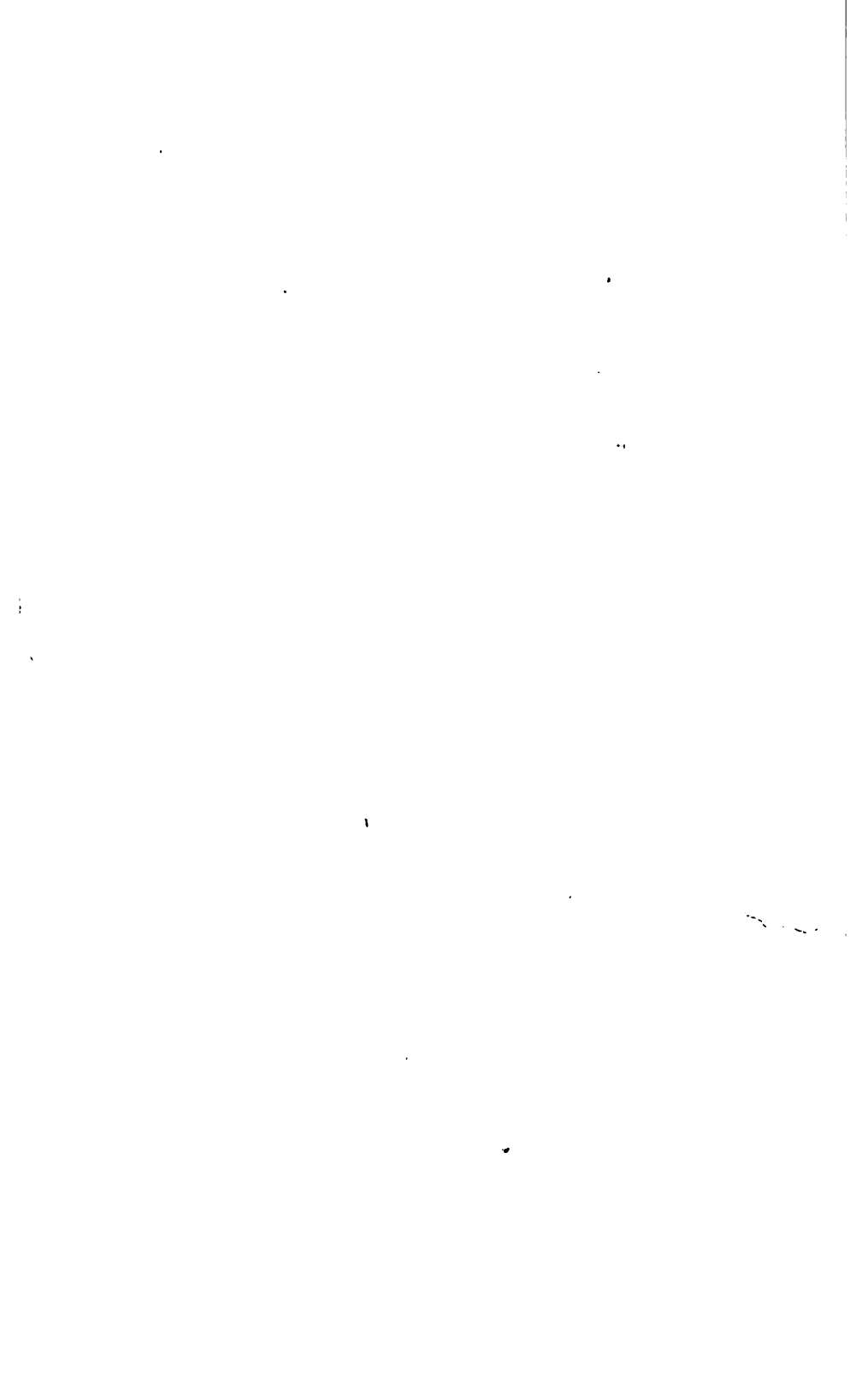
play, enriched with ideas supplemental or correlative to the ideas of the author, and valuable to author, artiste, and public by virtue of *reasons* being given for the award of blame or praise.

Until the advent of this better season—and probably the mean season will be very long—let us be thankful for small mercies, accepting the inevitable in a resigned if not a cheerful spirit; and let us cast out all easy cant about high art and impossible ideals, the result of cheap thinking; nor let us talk gloomily of French acting, and the superlative merits of the Comédie Française—as merits beyond our own English powers of realisation—neither denouncing authors because they are compelled to write plays under special limitations, nor artistes for thinking of themselves in accordance with the instincts of human nature—nor managers for not ruining themselves by the production of intellectual dramas—nor dramatic critics because the material they analyse may not be worthy of their highest powers; and finally, discarding all plausible nostrums, let us hold fast by one simple truth, the elevation of the English stage *must* be the work of the English public.

AUGUSTUS W. DUBOURG.









Drawn by Miriam Kerns.]

LONDON SOCIETY'S VALENTINES.



OLD LOVE AND NEW.

IF Edith use me as a toy
 To kill an idle day,
 Or look upon me as a boy,
 To call or send away ;
 If she be fickle as the wind,
 Then I'll be fickle too,
 And leave her soon, that I may find
 Another maid to woo.

If Mary care not for a sigh,
 And laugh at all my love,
 I will not plead again and cry
 For pity from above ;
 If she no longer can be kind,
 Then I'll be kindless too,
 And leave her soon, that I may find
 Another maid to woo.

If Annie, who did kiss me once
 In early courtship days,
 Should teach me I was but a dunce
 To trust her wanton ways—
 If she should learn to change her mind,
 Then I will change mine too,
 And leave her soon, that I may find
 Another maid to woo.

If Bessie tell me to my face
 She hath no love for me,
 Then earth is but a prison place
 Of daily misery.
 If she be careless as the wind,
 Still will my soul be true :
 I love her so, I may not find
 Another maid to woo.

GUY ROSLYN.

RAPE OF THE GAMP.

CHAPTER XVII.

BITER BIT.

'SIT down,' said Mr. Browne, when Frank came into his private office, quivering all over with rage. But the son's fury was at once calmed by the pale anguish of his father's face.

'I suppose,' Mr. Brown said, 'you have not yet heard that the offices of Baily, Blythe, and Baily are closed?'

Frank had not heard even a word in warning of such a catastrophe. But the blow was so sudden that he said nothing.

'Nor that your nice brother-in-law has squandered every penny of his wife's fortune, and left the country?'

Frank winced at this.

'And laid himself open to actions for conspiracy and fraud?'

'How so?' Frank asked.

But Mr. Browne went on with his grievous catechism. 'Nor that the 500*l.* which I had laid by for Hubert's outfit is gone?'

'D—n it!' Frank ejaculated, involuntarily. At this little outbreak a sickly smile played for a moment over the father's face, but immediately gave place to the settled expression of pain.

'Nor,' he continued—'nor that Blanche had no more right to the fortune which she has lost than I have to the crown jewels?'

'What matters that?' asked the son savagely.

'Nor'—his father went on—'nor that Janet holds her fortune, or the title to it, entirely on the sufferance of Bedford Lyte?'

Again Frank ground his white teeth together, and scowled in silence.

'In short,' Mr. Browne resumed gasping, 'General Lyte, the Captain's father, executed *two wills*, one faulty, the other perfect. The Bailys suppressed the latter testament, which was a facsimile of the former, without a flaw, and allowed, or, I fear, encouraged, Captain Lyte to set aside the former, and to bequeath the fortune in which he had only a life-interest to your sisters. The suppressed will, leaving the whole fund to Bedford Lyte at his uncle's death, was kept by the Bailys, and offered only the other day to that young man for a pecuniary consideration, to avert their ruin. Either in a fit of drunken spleen with the Bailys, or in some wild freak of generosity, the heir thrust that document, the title-deed of his fortune, into your brother-in-law's fire, and three adult witnesses saw it utterly destroyed.'

'Hurrah!' cried Frank, feeling at the beginning of this revelation dismayed and discomfited, but suddenly, by the last disclosure, relieved of an insupportable weight of ignominy and distress.

'How do you know all this, sir?' he asked, curious to ascertain the sources of his father's information; but knowing well that the astute old lawyer would not have accepted this marvellous tale, or anything short of absolute demonstration.

'How?' his father repeated with severity. 'Did I ever believe in will-o'-the-wisps? Have I not always regretted that will of Captain Lyte's, and felt that it would have been better for my children to share and fare alike?'

'You have, sir,' replied Frank, 'anxious, as far as his own emotion would permit, not to aggravate his father's distress. 'Yet you will admit that it is natural and proper for me to be able to refer to the evidence on which my belief in these strange events is to be founded?'

'The papers will be found sorted and docketed in No. 7 of my private drawers, under the letter L,' Mr. Browne replied. And Frank could not avoid a suspicion that his father spoke as if he were giving directions to be carried out in case of his unexpected death. 'In the meantime you may as well read *this*. It is full of undesigned evidence of a valuable and singular character.' And the father handed a bulky letter to the son, and sat listlessly thrumming on the table with his fingers, and staring vacantly at Frank's face, over which a succession of changes came and went as he read. The letter ran as follows:—

'HONOURED SIR,—Being an old servant, Joseph Foot by name, of Mr. Bailly, Sen., and formerly not unknown to you, when I served the late Captain Lyte at Boxwood Villa, near Pedlington, I make bold to appeal to you for a just compensation, which I hesitate to ask of Mrs. George. In the year 1850, after serving Mr. Bailly for four years as upper footman, or groom of the chambers, I married a young person as was lady's-maid to Miss Eleanor. Mr. George since done me the kindness to make me office messenger. But Mrs. Foot, she left me—'

(Here the editor of these memoirs omits some unrepresentable matter, which, however, appeared to affect Frank's mind, as he perused it, with a sense of the horrible reality of that which his father had so abruptly disclosed.

Then the following passages occurred.)

'Mr. Bedford Lyte, honoured Sir, is said to have abducted Miss Eleanor. Many a half-sovereign Mr. Bedford have given me, if I do not make too bold. He never took Miss E. away, Sir. Mr. George, he put the letter that Mr. Bedford wrote from Basle in her way. He wrote for his money, honoured Sir, that Mr. George used to draw for him from the India House. His own words was, "Tell no one my address, and burn this when read. As my uncle has thought proper to drive me into solitude, I wish to be alone until I can cut out for myself a path through the hard rock, and make friends among those who, like myself, are travelling in desert places." Mr. George threw the letter in the drawing-room fender, careless-like. I was going to pick it up, when he tells me to mind my own business, and not pry into things which don't concern me. Which I had no mind for to do. But seeing that Mr. George was plotting like, I made bold to step upstairs between the courses and look at the letter. And when Miss Eleanor came up from dinner she saw Mr. Bedford's handwriting, and read the letter too. That is how she knew where Mr. Bedford was. She had not heard from him since he had the difference with the Captain, and went away. Mrs. Foot, as was lady's-maid to Miss Eleanor, can tell, and has often told me, honoured Sir, when I saw her (and begged of her to leave that handsome villa and return to her humble home) that Miss Eleanor had been wild to know where Mr. Bedford had gone. She was to have been his wife, as no doubt you know, Sir; but when Mr. Bedford found out that she was not Miss Bailly at all, he was too proud to marry her, being a real gentle-

man as he was. We knew all about it, Sir. We often asked Mrs. Gammidge (housekeeper) who Miss E. was. But Mrs. G. only said that Miss E. was three years old when she arrived in Russell Square six months after her master's marriage, and that she seemed strange even with Mrs. Baily, though she was so like mistress that we all knew who was her mamma. Who her papa was I had my suspicion, honoured Sir; but it did not become me to talk. How any person with a knowledge of fisionomy can have thought Miss Eleanor Mr. George's sister is hard to tell. Next day, after reading that letter, when her papa (as she called him) and Mr. George was at the office, Miss E. drove off to the terminus with her trunk. Mrs. Foot was with her, and saw her take a through ticket to Baale, and came back without her, for Miss E. never came home again. And, honoured Sir, you may hear the truth from the Dowager Lady Balbry, who lives at Myrtle Dell, near Cork.

'I make bold to put you in mind, honoured Sir, that Mrs. Foot came back to me only a few days ago, with expensive habits, as certainly very handsome and elegant she is, but without the 250*l.* which Mr. George promised to give her, and which it does not become me to ask of Mrs. George.

'And now I proceed. Last Thursday evening, only a few minutes after Mr. Lay and the junior clerks had left, Mr. Bedford he comes to our office——'

At these words Frank started, as if out of a horrid dream, and saw his father staring at him with those dull, leaden eyes, and still thrumming listlessly on the table between them.

'That scoundrel in England!' exclaimed Frank.

'It seems so. Read on,' said the old man.

'But who *was* Eleanor's father, then?' asked Frank.

'Captain Lyte.'

'And her mother?'

'The lady who afterward became Mrs. Baily. Read on.'

Frank uttered one long reflective whistle, and then returned to the letter, which proceeded thus:

'I did not recognise Mr. Bedford just at first, for the gas was turned out in the clerks' office, and there was only one lighted candle on Mr. George's table. He had a great beard, too, and seemed older and more careworn. Belike he had come from Germany, as he did once before three years since, to renew a mortgage, as I understood, or to pay some interest on it. But this time, I know, he came to redeem the mortgage on Miss Lyte's life. He had the thousand pounds in his hand. Perhaps you don't know, honoured Sir, that he had borrowed that thousand pounds when he came of age, and had bought an annuity with it for a certain lady whose name is not mentioned now. Mr. George said, and put it in the deed (so the law stationer told me), that Mr. Green lent the money. *Mr. Green!* There was no such person. It was a dummy that Mr. George and his father used to pretend to be a live person, to do things which they didn't hardly like to do of themselves.

'Well, when poor Mr. Bedford brought out his thousand pounds, which I dare say he had worked hard enough and stinted himself to save, Mr. George said he was very sorry, but *Mr. Green had foreclosed* a week before. Then Mr. Bedford he caught Mr. George by the neckerchief, and shook him this way and that, till all Mr. George's legs and arms was flying

about the office anyhow. I never seed such capers cut in my born days, honoured Sir. A-gasping, and a-choking, and a-spluttering, Mr. George gurgled out, "I-I-I could no-no-not help it. Phe-phe-phe-phe-elps let me sup-pup-pup-pose you were in German-erman-erman-ee." And I did think Mr. George would never have got Germany out of his mouth without choking. Then Mr. Bedford left off for a moment; but directly Mr. George began again to say, "Gre-gre-gre-gre," Mr. Bedford shook him again, and hurled him into the corner, where he tumbled over his own chair, and lay in a most ridiculous posture.

'Old Mr. Baily, honoured Sir, hearing the noise—as well he might, for it was like two chimney-pots a-tumbling downstairs—opens the double doors between his room and Mr. George's, and seeing Mr. Bedford (looking awful, and shouting out "Liar!" to Mr. George), slips back as nimble as nimble, and locks both doors again, and pops his head out of window, and calls "Police! police!" And in less than a minute up comes a policeman and a commissioner.

'Mr. George—I will say he is good in a difficulty—had picked himself and his chair up, and was sitting on it. "Oh, policeman," he says, "and you, Edwards" (that is the commissioner), "just be good enough to step into the outer office and sit down for a few minutes. I wish you presently to witness a signature for my client here, as the clerks are gone home." The policeman looks suspiciously at Mr. Bedford, who stood terrible on the hearthrug, while Mr. George's hair, and his collar, and tie, was all askew. But out they goes. And I staid inside the door to protect Mr. George, honoured Sir; for I did think Mr. Bedford might kill him, as you know he killed some one

else whose name is not mentioned now.

'Then Mr. George begins speaking very low. "Give me your I O U for two thousand pounds, or give me that thousand down and your I O U for another thousand, and Janet Browne's fortune shall be yours as soon as you can prove a will."

"How?" exclaims Mr. Bedford, staring at him, and looking amazed, but not at all pleasant.

'Then Mr. George tells him that his grandfather, the General, executed a second will, because the first was faulty; that the will which Captain Lyte had set aside (thinking it the only one) was waste paper, and that the Captain's will was worse than waste paper, as the General's last will and testament, perfect, and signed and witnessed all in due form, was now in a drawer in old Mr. Baily's escriptorium, and should be produced and proved at once, if Mr. Bedford would just hand over that thousand and the I O U. The will, he said, was the same, word for word, as the one set aside, and left him (Mr. Bedford) sole heir to the whole property if his uncle should die without legal issue, as he had done.

'I was surprised, honoured Sir, to hear that two young ladies, so much thought of and admired as Mrs. George Baily and Miss Janet Browne, might lose their fortunes with a stroke of Mr. Bedford's pen. But Mr. George he quite thought Mr. Bedford would give in, and looks him hard in the face, as bold as brass.

'Mr. Bedford also looks hard at him, and seems to be puzzled for a while; and I didn't know which way he was going to decide. Presently he speaks very slow and deliberate, as if he was reading out of a book.

"In short," he says, "you kept

a worthless document for my uncle to set aside, and *so* play into your hands, and a valid one for *me* to avail myself of, and *so* play into your hands, at the expense of his innocent legatees."

"And how about my interest in my wife's fortune?" asks Mr. George.

"I can just see far enough into your mean rascality," Mr. Bedford answers, "to feel sure that you have spent all *that* before making me this iniquitous offer; or else that you have some private information which makes you think it impossible to keep the secret of the second will any longer. But you say that document is in the next room. Let me see it before I decide."

"Then Mr. George gets up briskly, and gives the usual three knocks at Mr. Baily's door, and, after a few whispered words between them two, old Mr. Baily, trembling from head to foot, comes in with the open deed in his hand, and, keeping pretty near his own door, hands it to Mr. George, who hands it over to Mr. Bedford. He glanced rapidly down every page of it, and groaned aloud when he came to the General's signature at the end. Then he says, "You two gentlemen have robbed (excuse me, I mean deprived) my grandfather in his grave of his bequest to me, and my uncle of his honour on the verge of the grave. I, too, have done you a wrong, which, doubtless, you have found it hard to forgive. Now, at last, let us make some atonement, and wrong no one else."

"Then Mr. Bedford with his own hand and foot thrust the deed, the General's will, which was a fortune to him, into the fire; while old Mr. Baily and Mr. George too seemed so surprised, that they only stood and stared at him. The dull fire kindled up and burned the deed,

and lit up Mr. Bedford's face a-stooping over it. And it was like the face of Michael the Archangel in the picture at the National Gallery.

"Then he was going without another word or a look at Mr. George or the old gentleman; but, catching my eye, and remembering all of a sudden who I was, he put his hand on me kindly, and said, "What, Foot! *you* here!"—because, you know, Sir, I was in the house, not in the office, when Miss Eleanor was at home. So he puts his hand on my arm—an awful hand to get hit by, but quite kind—and he looks hard at me, and says, "What, Foot! are *you* honest yet?" "I hope so, sir," I replies, not quite comfortable in my mind on account of Mrs. Foot and Mr. George. Then he gives me a pound. Nothing won't tie up *his* purse as long as there's a pound in it. And off he walks, jerking open the door suddenly, and, I suspect, finding the policeman pretty close to it; for I heard him laugh and say, "Quite a cammer-obscure, isn't it, policeman?"—meaning, as they was in the dark outer office peeping through the keyhole at us that had the fire-light, such as it was, and the candle in Mr. George's room.

"That is all, honoured Sir. I shall not open my mouth about the will that Mr. Bedford burned; and I hope you will make me the compensation Mr. George promised for the wrong he done me.

'Your humble Servant,

'JOSEPH FOOT.'

'A strange story! Is it true?' said Frank.

Mr. Browne only nodded.

'We must shut this fellow's mouth,' Frank urged.

Again Mr. Browne nodded, with a sickly smile.

'It would never do to let

Blanche hear this blackguard's story, after being robbed of her fortune and deserted.'

Still his father continued to smile in a horrible manner.

'There's one drop of consolation in it all,' insisted Frank: 'between them all, they have managed to make a beggar of that mad devil, Bedford Lyte.'

Mr. Browne, still smiling, only gasped, with livid lips.

Meanwhile the ladies were sitting silent and depressed in the drawing-room. The day of 'peace on earth and good-will to all men' had ended in dissension, dispute, and angry feeling, hardly allayed and ill-suppressed, when slowly but simultaneously a sense of something horrible crept over them all.

Staggering, confused footsteps came up the stairs, paused at the top, then passed the drawing-room door, with one dull thump against the panel.

Repressing a sudden faintness, Mrs. Browne hurried out. The girls flocked after her.

The Robber at the head, Frank and Albert at the feet, bore a rigid form along the passage. It was the body of a man, stretched upon a shutter. They opened a door at the end of the passage, entered the chamber, and laid it on the bed.

CHAPTER XVIII.

ORIANA.

It was the second morning after Christmas Day, the weather still clear and keen, the air bracing, slumbering Nature smiling in her frosty robe of sparkling silver, like an expectant bride, confident of the coming spring. The Parliamentary train, which faced the rising sun as it sped out of London through the hills and dales

of many-featured Kent, bore Mr. Lane, among other toilers, in a third-class carriage, or 'rolling pen,' as Frank Browne denominated that style of conveyance. The schoolmaster was not above the society of his fellow-workmen, and though free enough with his shillings, and his sovereigns too, for that matter, as Joseph Foot had implied, grudged the additional fare for the mere temporary use of a padded seat in a first-class carriage. When Frank caused his valuable person to be transported from one section of the country to another, you would have taken him for a Russian magnate or the heir to an English dukedom, so provident and tasteful were his travelling appointments, and so ambrosial his person. He carried vaguely about him the air of having left his mail phaeton with a groom and valet to follow by the ordinary train, he himself always travelling 'express.' You could almost fancy the hypothetical groom and valet—that is to say, valet and groom—travelling first class, ordinary, and tipping the guard a splendid shilling to connive at their Havana cigars. Yet all such creations would have been airy and unsubstantial; and Frank was invariably voyaging at the expense of a client. But Mr. Lane travelled third class by the Parliamentary train, reading a dog-eared Tauchnitz novel, and smoking a cracked china pipe, and drinking a glass of stale beer with an artillery-man at the Rochester Station.

He was hurrying back to Pedlington, having at his 'Retreat' in London, which was only an attic in the parsonage of a City rector, received an important letter from Frank, and considering that it required immediate attention. It had also been agreed upon between Mr. Lane and his spiritual ad-

viser that he should visit Miss Lyte once more before that lady left Mr. Browne's house, and that incidentally he should behave in such a way to a certain young lady as to convince her that he could not by any but the most remote possibility become a suitor for her hand.

When speaking of the gentleman's spiritual adviser we allude to the new rector of Pedlington, not to the London divine with whom Mr. Lane had been sojourning. Yet we may be tolerably sure that whatever counsel he had received in the former place would not have been weakened or impaired during his brief absence. Having given in his adhesion to the advice concerning his behaviour to Janet Browne, he had hit upon a grim and savage way of executing it—one suited to his humour. Nor was he sorry of the excuse for acting upon it rapidly, lest perchance his resolution might fail, though his friends wisely considered that a little absence and delay would soften the incidence of the blow, and cause the dealing of it to be less difficult. Their wisdom was *caviare* to Mr. Lane. He fumed and raved at all procrastination.

The absence of his ancient and constant companion in rain and sunshine had been sincerely deplored by Mr. Lane, and (previous to that strange Sunday evening's interview with Janet, when, in her girlish petulance, she had provoked him to ask for it) had seriously puzzled him. Once since then he had asked Hubert whether it happened to be lying about anywhere at his father's house, but had begged him not to mention it to others, as the matter was wholly unimportant. Janet had surprised her brother hunting for it in the rack and in the wash-house, where wet umbrellas, left

to dry, were sometimes forgotten. Knowing well what was the object of his search, she yet asked him, with a clear, innocent face, and he told her it was the great gamp, the loss of which had caused his friend to suffer from rheumatism in the shoulder and neuralgia in the face and neck. Janet ran up to her room and cried, but not before Hubert had seen the generous blush with which she turned away. 'And didn't she blush when I told her you had caught the rheumatism from getting wet! that's all!' explained the pupil, adding, 'I suppose she was thinking of that day when we first met on the river, and all the chaff there was about it;' for he had no suspicion where the instrument in question was concealed. But Janet clung tenaciously to her purpose and the gamp, and Mr. Lane said no more about it. After that time he knew that she was keeping his former retainer in mysterious durance, and felt that such a proceeding on the part of a young lady was, to say the least of it, unique and noticeable. Moreover, this secret, lying *perdu*, so to speak, between these two persons of opposite sexes, had caused a dangerous and mysterious sympathy, or *rapprochment*, to grow up between them. And, upon the whole, I should recommend any young lady of my family or acquaintance *not* to conceal a gentleman's umbrella surreptitiously, lest the owner should prove to be a man less chivalrous and gentle than Mr. Lane. Some inexperienced young gentlemen have been known to become quite confident and foolishly elated at a similar trespass of conventional limits by fair experimentalists.

The train deposited our wayfarer on the Pedlington platform at half-past eight in the morning, and he walked forthwith to the Rectory, reading Frank's letter for

the twentieth time as he walked. He certainly did read that letter more often than necessity or prudence could have required; and had Mr. Lane been a coxcomb, the sweet that was in it might have drowned the bitter. But, as it was, the cup contained a bitter draught, though still there was sweetness in it, and he drank it and drained it dry. Let us read it over his shoulder as he walks and reads.

'MY DEAR LANE' (it ran)—'It is very fortunate you did *not* dine with us to-day (Christmas Day), though it is now verging on "to-morrow", as I wanted you to do. For all of us except my father the day began well enough, but has ended most miserably for all. The morning post had brought my father the astounding news that Baily, Blythe, and Baily (Blanche's husband and father-in-law, you know) had failed. How, or why, we as yet have no notion. He kept the secret to himself till after dinner, and then only confided it, along with more disclosures of the strangest character, to me as his partner. But the strain had been too much for the old boy. Fortunately, he had told me all first; then another attack of epilepsy came on, and nearly took him off. The worst (or nearly the worst) of it is that all Blanche's fortune is gone. Owing to some most improper arrangement between Mr. Baily and the late Captain Lyte, only a mere song was settled upon poor Blanche, and that is all she has left. And the governor has lost the 500*l.* which he had allowed them to invest for Hubert's benefit. I assure you I feel five years older already. Baily seems to have acted with incredible faithlessness, and what, I fear, we must consider deliberate villainy. It is a double blow to me; for you know

I rather stand upon my estimate of character; and I always supported Baily (who, like Sappho, has had his detractors), and came down heavily upon that infernal rascal Bedford Lyte, who, I must admit, has lately made some atonement for his villainy.

'Miss Lyte also, you will be surprised to hear, thought proper to behave in the most unkind and unfriendly manner, fulfilling in our case the proverbial concurrence of misfortunes. She drank her precious nephew's health, and took his part to our faces: a fellow who, I think I told you, ran away with Blanche's sister-in-law, and left her to go to the dogs in some foreign country. He also casually murdered a baronet, a client of Mr. Baily's who tried to rescue the poor girl. It happens that this nice young man, being a spendthrift, like most criminals, had mortgaged his reversionary interest in the old lady's life to Baily or some ally of his, and that, the mortgage having expired, Baily foreclosed before the smash, which looks to me like "biter bit." The odd coincidence is that the fellow had the money all the time to redeem it, but neglected to do so till it was too late, trusting to the generosity of a man whom he had so injured and disgraced, and upon whom he committed a felonious assault when he found out his mistake.

'But now, my dear fellow, I want further to confide in you as a friend. You must see that we all have held you in more esteem than we do mere casual acquaintances, and that we have a sincere regard for you, which I flatter myself you reciprocate. I have this evening had a most extraordinary scene with Janet, who is going off to Pitsville with Miss Lyte in a day or two, and vows she will give up her fortune to

this seducer and assassin when she comes of age. She chooses to believe a cock-and-a-bull story which Miss Lyte has most improperly told her, to the effect that Bedford Lyte (this nephew) was unjustly disinherited by his uncle. As if Captain Lyte could not do as he chose with his own money! And it does seem that the young man has voluntarily resigned some real or fictitious claim to this inheritance which Baily at the last moment offered to place at his disposal for a large sum of money. But no practical man or woman could attach any value to such a doubtful incident.

'At first I was savage with Janet; and you will admit that the disclosures of the day have been calculated to ruffle a serene temper. But anger is thrown away upon her, and I resorted to reason. I asked her what she would do if she wanted to marry a man with no money, but with prospects and abilities, and whom her fortune might help on in life—in short, whom it might assist to achieve the very highest position. She said, and I believe she means it, that she would never marry any but one man in the whole world, now or at any future time, and that this particular (and peculiar) man would rather take her without money than with. You *must* guess, you *must know*, Lane, who that man is. No fellow with his eyes open could have been in your place and not suspected it. And I can confirm the suspicion, for I unfortunately put that very nonsense into her head myself. The truth is that I thought she was setting her heart upon a certain person, and told her that he would not marry a girl with money, because you had said as much, and I wanted to save her from laying up misery and disappointment for herself. But Janet is very deep

and wilful. She has held to her preference in spite of me. There is only one way of curing her of this folly about giving up her fortune, and only one man who can do it. It rests entirely with you. Come as soon as you can. When a thing must be done, it cannot be done too soon.

'Ever yours,

'F. B.'

'Anything wrong?' asked Key, after the first warmth of his greeting was over, and he had time to notice how depressed Mr. Lane looked. Then the latter told him of the calamities which had fallen upon his parishioners the Brownes.

'Sorry Christmas fare,' said the divine, who had already heard by letter of the loss of Mr. Lane's reversionary interest, and also of the destruction of General Lyte's second and last will, which circumstance he trusted might be used to bring about a reconciliation between the Brownes and Miss Lyte's nephew. At the same time, he was in possession of information which had induced him to counsel Mr. Lane's temporary absence from Pedlington, and his present purpose of behaving to Janet Browne in a way wholly dissimilar to that suggested by her affectionate brother. Indeed, while Frank was urging Mr. Lane to claim that fair damsel as his bride, and to persuade her to retain her fortune, Mr. Key was relying upon that gentleman's promise to shake Janet's preference for him, which the ecclesiastic had not been slow to perceive. Moreover, he seemed to differ from her brother as to the most desirable destination for that portion of 'the root of all evil' which had fallen to the young lady's lot.

'I wish we could get Janet into a convent,' the priest observed, with much relish of his own idea.

'It is impossible to foresee the good that might be done with that 12,000*l*. My college at Cambridge, the *Domus antiqua et religiosa*, as it was and ought still to be, was founded by a pious lady who lost her husband in a silly tournament on her wedding-day, and devoted her vast wealth to a better cause than matrimonial selfishness.'

On hearing this remark, it must be admitted that Mr. Lane, *malgré* his piety, experienced a slight access of that 'cold chill' which Frank had complained of in Key's society. After refusing the meagre seductions of the divine's breakfast-table, the layman sallied forth on his melancholy errand, alone and disconsolate, promising to return and report progress of its fulfilment.

Little more than a week had elapsed since he had quitted the scene of his labours, but he felt as if years had transpired since last he trod these familiar pavements. The town itself looked old and quaint. The changes within him reflected themselves on the face of outward objects. For more than two years his life had flowed evenly among these scenes. The current had been deep and swift, but unbroken. Now it seemed to have been suddenly checked, and, like a river turned aside, to be hurling itself against unknown obstacles.

The phantom of this young girl, whose fair dream he was going to dispel, had taken possession of the citadel within him—had, without his knowledge, and assuredly without his consent, seated itself on the throne of his affections, and assumed the regal sceptre. It had commenced its silent reign before he was aware of its intrusion. In one moment, as she stood before him in the tea-room on the evening of Mrs. Browne's party, he recognised the double of the tyrant

which held sway within him. In that moment the exotic sentiment sprang up miraculously, assumed the stature and dignity of the master-passion, and cast the whole man, with all his noble attributes, into shadow. Gazing at a flower! He was dozing under the upas-tree, inhaling a delicious poison at every breath.

But it is one thing to be overthrown (if we may suddenly discard one metaphor and adopt another) and another thing to crawl out of the lists defeated. On behalf of the lady as well as himself, Mr. Lane rose and renewed the strife. Who shall say whether the reasoning or the sensuous part of his nature predominates until he becomes involved in such a struggle as this? Who can predict which shall prevail? We may put out of the lists at once the victims of many little passions. They are incapable of understanding even the power of the master-passion. To them it cannot by any possibility occur. This fiery trial is reserved for the single-hearted, as if the strong man only were worthy of such a test. Of the other sex in such a case how shall a man write? Silently those sweet souls suffer, and often in their dole become so pure and holy that we can only wonder at them, and pay a higher tribute of admiration to the flower of womanhood than that which we lavished on the budding girl.

Mr. Lane honestly accepted the conditions of the strife. Imagination was not to be trusted. Reason was still at his disposal. He goaded it into activity, plotting sternly with himself as to the most effectual means of rendering himself distasteful to the girl he loved. He took certain words of Frank's letter literally: 'There is only one way of curing her of this folly.' It rests entirely with you.' But by

'this folly' Frank meant the giving up her fortune. Mr. Lane, who knew another way of preventing *that*, meant the taking to her heart a baneful love; and the cure to which Frank alluded was a very different process to that which Mr. Lane in his integrity contemplated.

Albert met him in the hall with a melancholy voice and visage. 'Good morning, Mr. Lane, he said. 'How do you do? It is an age since we saw you last. Do you mind walking in here?' And so saying, opened the dining-room door, which was at the foot of the stairs.

But the visitor turned upon him rudely, and walked to the umbrella stand, saying, in a loud voice, 'Is my gamp here?—a large green one, with a yellow stick.'

'Oh, hush!' whispered poor Albert tremulously, for he had left the dining-room door open, and Janet was within. 'Haven't you—ahem!—that is, has it not been returned to you? I remember it perfectly well.'

'No, it has not,' replied Mr. Lane emphatically. 'Do you think *you* could find it for me to take away presently?'

'Oh, certainly,' Albert acquiesced, performing imaginary manual ablutions, and in great mental trepidation — 'certainly; I will make a point of finding it. It shall be placed in the stand.'

'Thank you,' said the visitor. But the tone of voice in which it was said and the fixed look which accompanied it approached nearer to a threat than an expression of gratitude. Then he entered the dining-room, and found Nelly and Janet, one seated on each side of the fire. Shaking hands with them in a cold and abstracted manner, he asked after Mr. Browne, and then after Mrs. George Baily, saying that he had heard from Frank,

who had given him some slight sketch of the calamities which had befallen them.

'But papa is already a little better,' said Janet; 'and if he continues to improve, mamma is to take him to Dover next week: he rallied there so wonderfully after his last attack.'

'But who else do you think is going away?' asked Nelly.

'Who?' Mr. Lane inquired.

'Janet,' cried Nelly, evidently thinking the announcement would stagger the gentleman; 'Janet! She will persist in going away with Miss Lyte, when we are all so unhappy, and want her so much at home. Is it not unkind of her?'

Janet was somewhat taken aback by this, and suddenly hoped Mr. Lane would expostulate with her on such an intention; for she had only thought of going to put an end to the dissension which had arisen about her inheritance, and perhaps to exhibit or manifest her indifference at Mr. Lane's protracted absence. But her heart melted at his presence, and she would gladly have capitulated at his first offer of a parley.

But what had come to Mr. Lane? He had not been inside their doors nor exchanged a word with any of them for three weeks; and yet now he seemed to ignore Janet's very existence. She was going away, so Nelly said, and he only made answer, 'I shall be here for another fortnight. Perhaps I may come in sometimes *when they are gone*. I am such an old friend, you know.' And turning to Nelly, with a sad smile, he went on: 'I feel as if I were more welcome in a house of mourning than a house of joy.'

He stood on the hearthrug with his back to the fire, between the two sisters, and stared vacantly at the portrait of some ancestral Browne above the sideboard at the opposite end of the room. Janet

had not caught a word of what was said outside, owing to the size of the hall and the length of the dining-room; she was, consequently, quite unprepared for Mr. Lane's altered manner, which was particularly galling and humiliating to her proud spirit.

'I don't,' she blurted out, in rejoinder to his last words; 'I don't. I am no use in a house of mourning, because I never think about any one but myself. Trouble only makes me angry.'

Morbidly exaggerated as this was, there was a dash of desperate and truthful satire in it, which ought to have called for deprecation and soothing from any gallant man. But there stood this grim Eliphaz between the two gentle girls, giving little comfort to either.

'Oh, *don't* believe her, Mr. Lane,' urged Nelly. To which he only answered mechanically, 'People who let trouble make them angry are better out of the way of it.'

Nelly was aghast. She could not tell what to make of it, and began in a confused and tumultuous sort of way to think that she must have been mistaken all along in this man, who proved so harsh and odious at such a moment. Janet cowered in the large old-fashioned arm-chair, biting her lips, and hardly repressing tears of anger and humiliation. Was this the requital of love—'young love, firstborn, and heir to all'?

A servant came in and said Miss Lyte would like to speak a few words with Mr. Lane in the drawing-room. When he had followed the girl, Nelly came across and knelt down by Janet, taking her hand and stroking it gently.

'What does it mean, my pet?' she asked. 'I hate him. He shall not come here when you are gone, with his grim, horrible old face and his gamp!'

But Janet had thrown off her

caressing hand as though it had been a serpent, and poor Nelly was on the horns of a sentimental dilemma. Seeing her distress, Janet brightened up with an effort, and took her hand back into favour. 'Yes, he shall come,' she said, 'and you will have all the gentlemen to yourself, dear; for, of course, poor Blanche cannot see anybody. Perhaps *he* will make love to *you*: he never did to *me*.'

'He is my brother,' Nelly gravely responded. 'At least I thought him so until this morning, because you love him.'

'Don't be ridiculous, Nelly,' the poor girl replied, but scarcely able to say it for the irrepressible sob.

'Oh yes, you do, dear,' Nelly went on. 'I have a heart, though you think I haven't. I can tell true love when I see it, at least in one of us. And I did think the Tulip loved you, though he is so absurdly grave about it. But now I do not know what to think of him. I suppose he is like the rest of the men, and wants money, and that Frank has told him you intend to give away your fortune without your hand.'

Again Nelly's hand was flung away like a venomous reptile. 'What did I tell you about the Black Tulip, the flower?' she asked.

'Oh, there's only ONE, of course—only one in the world!' replied Nelly, again taking the recalcitrant hand and stroking it. 'But, for that matter, dear, there is only one Bachelor's-Button, you know; and I know *he* won't have poor *me*, because Captain Lyte left me out of his will.' 'The Bachelor's Button' was the botanical title of Mr. Perkins, Nelly's favourite admirer at that time, and a wealthy young man, being distantly connected with the brewing interest, but of a mercenary and unromantic disposition.

'Nonsense!' retorted Janet. 'There are hundreds of bachelors'-buttons in the Sittington Woods. How dare you talk like that about Mr. Lane?'

'I thought, dear,' this sly damsel replied, 'that, as you *don't* love him, I could say what I liked about him.'

And Nelly went away to sit with her sister Blanche, thinking that, perhaps, it would be as well for Mr. Lane to find Janet alone when he returned from the drawing-room; for he would be sure to look into the dining-room again, she thought, before leaving the house.

Scarcely had she left the room when Albert came in, approached his sister nervously, and said, in a low voice, '*He wants his umbrella.*'

'Did he say so to *you*?' asked Janet, again with that ball in her throat.

'Yes,' Albert replied softly. 'He is vexed at something. I could see it in his eyes.'

'He is angry with me,' thought Janet—'with poor little me, though he is so kind to naughty boys. What have I done? I have taken Miss Lyte's part against my own family, and spoken up for that poor wicked young man because they are all so unjust to him. So would Mr. Lane take his part if he heard the whole story. And now they say I am running away from a house of sorrow. But they would only tease my life out because I am determined to give up a fortune to which I have no right, and which I don't want. What do I want of a fortune? *He* does not want the fortune, *nor* *me* either.'

That suggestion of Nelly's found no place in Janet's mind. She was too noble to think ignobly of the man she loved.

Presently, seeing Albert still standing ruefully before her, and having her heart softened by grief,

she said to him, 'What is it that you want, you poor dear old CIPHER?'

'*His umbrella,*' Albert solemnly rejoins.

So she went slowly upstairs and into her chamber, opened the closet-door, looked at her captive, released him, kissed his mended wounds, carried him slowly and tenderly downstairs, and placed him supine on the hall table, like a patient in a convalescent ward parting stolidly from his weeping nurse.

'Why should he hate me? What have I done?' she murmured plaintively.

Then creeping upstairs again, more slowly, as far as the drawing-room door, she stood there for a few moments, with finger on her lip, hesitating. Did she know that her attitude was a charming *pose*, and herself an exquisite picture of courage tempered with feminine delicacy? I suppose not. Her hopes and fears, and purposes and regrets were all too highly pitched, the tension of her mind too strong, for little feminine vanities to play their part. She paused with the mere delicate hesitancy of her age and sex at the thought of intrusion. But such was the temper of her mind and heart at that moment, that, had the drawing-room been a powder-magazine, and her movements inevitably productive of sparks, she would certainly have entered.

'*I will see him; I will hear his voice again,*' she said, with a terrible conviction forcing itself upon her that she was about to do so for the last time. Then she opened the door and walked in. It was the principal reception-room in her own father's house, yet she had no right to be there, and was evidently an intruder. Miss Lyte was sitting in a chair by the fire, and only looked up for an instant,

taking no notice whatever of Janet. She felt that silent rebuff to be a heavy blow, but the pain of it was soon superseded by a more poignant agony. Mr. Lane was standing by the other side of the fire, with his back to the door, but plainly saw the reflection of Janet advancing toward him in the pier-glass. Neither did he pay her the least attention. At any other time he would have turned and acknowledged her presence at least with a courteous inclination. Now indeed she saw him and heard his voice again, for he went on with what he was saying to Miss Lyte: 'You know I only effected that mortgage to buy *my wife* the annuity. And fortunately I would allow Bailly to have nothing to do with that. Smith pays *her* the annuity regularly, with the interest of her own two thousand pounds. The receipts in *her* own handwriting are sent to me twice every year.'

He turned round. The fair, gentle, generous girl was standing within two paces of him. Would he say nothing to her, this hard, cruel man? Would he smite her thus, and leave her to stagger and fall under his coward blow? She looked into his face wildly for a little space. His eye met hers—that eye into which formerly she she had seen the irresistible tenderness leap from the brimming fountains within. Now it glared at her with pitiless cruelty. Then half turning to the elder lady, he reiterated, 'In *my wife's* handwriting, every January and July.'

The stricken deer seeks a forest solitude to die in peace. And Janet thought if she could only reach her room without falling, there surely swift and utter desolation would stagnate the sources of her life, and insensibility would herald much-to-be-desired death. That she could any longer drag out the miserable filament of a human life she believed to be im-

possible. She thought that her mortal wound was already dealt, and only dreaded to die in agony under the hateful gaze of human eyes. Mechanically she turned, walked slowly and silently out of the room, and reached her chamber.

When she had gone Miss Lyte spoke. 'It is a severe blow to Janet,' she said. 'My heart bleeds for the sweet, gentle child. God grant I may soothe and comfort her, and that we may yet find some pathway through this tangled wilderness. In the meantime you have done what is right. We should always choose the least of two evils, and act promptly on our choice.'

'You are right,' he managed to say. But the blow which he had dealt had recoiled with such force that his knees now shook under his own weight, and a giddiness and faintness fell upon him.

After a while he was going softly downstairs, entertaining a feeble purpose of stealing out of the house without confronting Frank. But that amiable person encountered him midway. 'Oh, I am so glad you have come,' he said. 'Of course you have not seen Janet yet. I am just going to titivate. Come up to my room for a few minutes.'

They ascended to the story above the drawing-room, and, passing a door before they reached Frank's, Mr. Lane felt or thought to himself, 'That is *her* door, and she is alone within.' He had no certain knowledge of his victim's room, yet some inward monitor told him truly. That really was the scene of her innocent virgin hopes, of her hopeless mute despair. He passed in at the next doorway, and sat on Frank's bed while the Adonis laved and scented himself.

Frank resumed the talk over his toilet as if his letter to his friend had been spoken.

'A wild idea—madness! is it not?' he asked, looking round, and

smiling between the ivory-backed brushes. 'The idea of giving up her fortune—giving it to an Assassin!' That term of obloquy appeared to render some mysterious consolation to Frank under his recent trials and present difficulties. So he repeated it: 'an Assassin.' In his secret mind he believed the moral guilt of the perpetrator of the deed in question to be aggravated by the fact that his prey had been a member of the British aristocracy. But he wisely abstained from diverting Mr. Lane's attention to that abstruse question in casuistry. 'I think a certain friend of mine will be able to cure Janet of that insane idea,' he continued. 'Love is a great physician. And common-sense, when prescribed by that practitioner, is more palatable than when a brother administers it. It is quite true, as my mother says, that the doctor and not the physic cures the patient. And then it's all moonshine talking about that Bedford Lyte being ill-used. The notion of ill-using an Assassin is too good! And pray why shouldn't you or I be allowed to leave our money (if we happened to have any) to a nice girl instead of to Dick Turpin? And why could not Captain Lyte leave his to his godchildren? And, what is more,' pursued Frank, preparing to lubricate his gums with some aromatic paste, and supposing his queries to be satisfactorily answered—'what is more, he *did* happen to have some money, and *did* leave it to them, 12,500*l.* to Blanche, and 12,500*l.* to Janet.'

Here Frank's monologue was temporarily interrupted by the gum paste, applied with a small sponge on the end of an ivory stick. After which he resumed:

'How that fellow Bailly can have squandered all Blanche's fortune I cannot think; nor, indeed, how Captain Lyte can have consented

to leave the money so loosely. My father knew nothing about the Captain's will, you know, till after his death, and Blanche had been married six months when he died. But, to say the least of it, the Bailys took an advantage of the old gentleman, and have behaved disgracefully throughout. Thank heaven, Janet's twelve thou' is safe; and it shall not be thrown away or given to an assassin, if we can help it. And what I was foolish enough to say to her about you won't hold water. It was from no want of regard to you; but when I saw you so averse to marrying, and Janet getting so—you know what I mean—I tried to check her. I confess it. I didn't want her to sit "like Patience on a monument smiling at grief," and all that sort of thing. But I failed. She stuck to you through thick and thin. And, let me tell you, Lane, though she's my own sister, that Janet is a very nice girl, and the sort of girl you won't pick up in every nasty little radical borough. And 12,500*l.* in consols is a very snug little nest-egg. And the affections of a nice girl are not to be sneezed at because she has a little money. Is she to forfeit the love of an honest man because her godfather named her in his will? Besides which—*Hullo!* my dear fellow, what is the matter?'

Mr. Lane's face was convulsed with twitchings very alarming to contemplate. 'Water!' he gasped, or croaked.

Frank handed him a tumbler of water, slightly ensanguined with the cochineal gum paste. This he deliberately, but with a trembling hand, conveyed to the nape of his neck, and poured down his own back. Then staggering to the basin, and leaning over it, he said, 'Pour on the back of my neck'—which Frank obligingly did, wondering meanwhile at this sudden illness and its hydropathic treatment.

Mr. Lane now plunged his head into the large camp-basin, and, after protracted immersions, stood up dripping. Frank threw a towel round his neck, and hopelessly applied other absorbents to his outward man, after which Mr. Lane spoke.

But before we listen to what he said, let us follow Janet with her dreadful news to the solitude of her chamber and the desolation of her heart. Half stunned at first, she felt the desolation growing and deepening upon her as sensibility returned. With a full consciousness and sense of her present misery, associations exquisitely painful, reviving ghosts of former joys, crowded about her heart. This humble apartment was the scene of all her sweet reveries. Here her conflict with Mr. Lane's stubborn indifference had been planned, here her gentle victory celebrated. On this very bed she had sat at the return from the river the afternoon upon which she had first seen him. In that closet, which served her as a wardrobe, his retainer had been kept in affectionate durance. It had lain at her feet on the very spot which they now touched. How lightly she had stepped over it into bed! calling it the threshold of his heart, and other graceful similitudes. How heavily now her little feet drooped on the insensate floor! How hard and cold must that man's heart have been all the time, when she was decking it in young love's flowery wreaths and posies! Not a tear rose to Janet's eye, not a tender emotion as yet mingled with her grief. In her chastisement she could see no justice, no reason in the furious overthrow of her affections. She had chosen, as she thought, the noblest man, had loved him because he was good and god-like. She was tired of all that was morally mean and paltry around her, and had desired to

worship some lofty ideal which would lift her into a purer region, where she might herself grow up to some nobler moral stature.

What sin had there been in her passion?—what littleness, even, of which she might accuse herself, and so find retributive justice in what had befallen her? Every one had held this man up for her admiration, her esteem. If she had venerated him, was it not because he seemed above them all in purity, in singleness of heart, in devotion, in truth? If she had loved him with a love in which, like the breath of a hot wind, her heart now seemed to wither, had not that love been the zephyr of her spring-time? Who and what had turned it to this scorching blast?

Had she wasted the breath of her affections, as many girls do, in fanning a succession of feeble, sensuous fancies? Had she not, on the other hand, scrupulously cherished her maiden regard, reserving it till the man of glorious attributes appeared, and then (dazzled by no outward splendour, won by no vain allurements) given it to him without stint, without reserve, without exacting any return?

By no unmaidenly advances, no arts, no coquettings, had she sought to win his love, only by trying and praying that she might be worthy of it, by her beauty (if that might be), by modesty, by constancy, and singleness of purpose.

At this point in her reflections footsteps of two men passed Janet's door, and were lost in the next room to hers.

'And what has come of my two years' devotion?' she asked herself. 'He strikes me down. He. He says he has a wife, somewhere, put away. He has loved once and for all, and left loving before he ever saw me. What does it mean? Can it be true? Oh, why did he not

come to *me*, to me alone, and tell me, and pity me? Then I could have borne it. He flung it at me like a stone, in the sight and hearing of another, without a word of pity, without a look of remorse. Hark! What is that?"

Frank's voice saying, in a high key, 'Hullo! my dear fellow! What is the matter?'

She knew who 'my dear fellow' was at once, without a moment's hesitation. She sprang to the door, opened it, and crept to the next door, which was slightly ajar.

'Water!' she heard Mr. Lane gasp. Then a pause. Then, 'Pour on the back of my neck.' Then a long splashing and trickling of water. After which she heard the voice which she still loved, somewhat altered, but still such that she could tell it among a thousand voices, saying:

'Frank, I must ask you to forgive me a great wrong which I have done to you and yours unknowingly; I beg of you to believe unknowingly. My plea for your consideration, your pardon, is that I too suffer. I cannot offer myself as Janet's husband, because—I have—a wife.'

'Why didn't you tell me so before?' asked Frank.

And the voice went on, while Janet leaned against the door-post for support: 'The story of my marriage is a horrible secret. I have felt obliged to conceal it, though now I see that in doing so I have done wrong.'

'You must have seen that Janet liked you,' urged Frank; and the frail form without shuddered against the friendly door-post. That she 'liked' him! Conceive the adulation of her fervid young heart being called a '*liking*'!

'I had no eyes but for *her*,' replied Mr. Lane. 'My eyes were blinded by her beauty. I did not even see that I loved her. Do you understand, Frank? I love her.'

(Janet embraced the door-post tenderly.) 'Only three weeks ago, on the night of your party, I found it out. Then I feared that she might return my love. Since then I have kept away until to-day. To-day I have said words which, if she has allowed herself to care for me, must indeed cure her of this disease.'

'Told her you had a wife?' asked Frank.

'Yes; and in a way to make her loathe me as a coarse, base cur.'

A long pause ensued, during which, in the painful stillness of the house, the beating of Janet's heart was so audible that she feared it would reveal her proximity to these two men.

Then Frank said, 'This has taken me frightfully aback. But I am heartily sorry for you, Lane. I'm certain you are a good fellow, and would have made Janet a kind husband. I always knew you had some confounded secret. But you are so cold to women that I never suspected it was this. Of course you put your foot in it when you were young and foolish, and have grown wise since. I was annoyed at first; but I can find no fault with you at all. You have never humbugged Janet, or angled for her affection; and since you saw danger you have acted like a good fellow. Poor girl! It is very hard upon her. What she saw to like in you I confess I don't know; but that she *does* care for you I am certain. She will be very much cut up. And you mark my words; she will give up her fortune to that Assassin as sure as your name is Lane.'

'I should scarcely think he'd be such a scamp as to take it,' said Mr. Lane.

'Wouldn't he?' retorted Frank. 'You don't know the fellow.'

'Don't I?' thought Mr. Lane to himself.

'It's my impression,' continued

Frank, 'that he would have assassinated his aunt to get her money if he had not lost his reversion of it.'

Janet returned to her solitude with very different feelings from those which had possessed her a short while ago. Something warm again stirred at her heart. Was it infant love, or hope, or merely joy? She had thought it smitten to the death, and with it all that was sweet and lovely in life had been enveloped in a funeral pall. But this vital principle had only been stunned or momentarily paralysed with the crushing weight of sorrow which had fallen upon her. It must have been some generous seed which passed rapidly through its hour of decay, and now germinated in the kindly soil of her affections. What was that penetrating, life-renewing, sympathetic glow which pierced the darkness of the grave, shrivelled up the envious cæment, and set the pulses of the heart throbbing and palpitating with new vitality, with a life which at once she knew to be eternal, undying, already strangling despair, like an infant Hercules in its cradle?

These questions she could not answer, although they chased each other with a myriad rainbow tints across the mysterious heaven which now vaulted all the former gloom, and swallowed up that former darkness in universal light. All was grand, splendid, incomprehensible, sublime! Welcome sorrow now, welcome trial, welcome suffering, self-abnegation, and hope deferred, if need be. She could bear all now. She dropped upon her knees and she prayed for fortitude and continued light, that she might see the Hand that created her put forth to chastise her in love, and with a wisdom inscrutable but worthy of perfect child-

like trust, that she might never again believe that she had fallen into the power of the Prince of Darkness, never again stumble so near to that awful fathomless abyss of doubt and dark despair.

She rose from her knees, after a long and fervid outpouring of her grateful heart, a gentle, submissive, trustful, loving woman. An hour before she was a vain girl, humiliated, crushed, angry, rebellious, and coquetting with despair.

Now she went again to her mirror, that glass wherein she was wont to hold counsel with herself, and to try to see herself with other people's eyes, to look at herself as it were from without.

She stood before it meekly, and saw her own beauty, and now for the first time recognised it as the gift of her Heavenly Father, and without any alloy of self-conceit or carnal vanity she thanked the Giver of all good for that little yet potent gift, from the fulness of her heart. Again, through all the shocks and pangs which she had so lately endured, a flash of intense pleasure forced its way upward and outward to her eyes and lips, and broke out in a sunny smile.

'His eyes were blinded by my beauty,' she murmured to her own heart. 'His dear, sad eyes! He loves me! He loves me!'

Then she sighed, and again said, 'His dear, sad eyes! He must not love me. I must not love him. But I will wait. I will never be untrue to him in life or death.'

'Dear, sad eyes!' she murmured again; 'they will be more sad now. I thought to make him happy *with my love*; instead of which I have taken his, and may not give him mine. But I will always be true to him. "Tis better to have loved and lost, than never to have loved at all." O my love! my love!'

So crying, she turned away from

that tell-tale mirror, and flung herself prone upon her bed, and wept.

* * * * *

When Mr. Lane reached the hall he found his *umbra* patiently reclining on the oak table. Resuming possession of this ancient property, he marched away dolefully, notwithstanding its repair, and the favourable interview which he had held with Miss Lyte.

'Well, how did it go off?' the parson inquired, on his return to the Rectory. Mr. Key, of course, was alluding to the important interview with Miss Lyte, which had sunk into quite a secondary place in Mr. Lane's estimation. The words, 'How did it go off?' grated upon his highly-wrought sympathy with Janet, of whom only he was thinking.

'It was fearful, horrible!' he replied, shuddering, and calling to mind the wild look of anguish with which Janet had appealed to him when those dreadful words were spoken.

'You surprise me,' said Key. 'I made sure that a woman of experience and judgment and Christian charity would take it well.'

'Take it well!' rejoined Mr. Lane fiercely. 'Take it well! So she did. What did the poor girl do or say? Nothing. Nothing. But my brutal, heavy hand had stricken her down. Key! Key! are you not human? Are you blind, man? I told her—told Janet—that I have a wife.'

The priest was not aware *how* Mr. Lane had purposed to do the task assigned to him, although the secret of his school-fellow's early manhood had been fully confided to him. It was his habit to look more at ends than at the means by which they were to be attained, and it seemed to him well that Lane should have adopted this blunt and straightforward method.

'It was a strong measure,' he said, 'but I think you have done what is right.'

These were the very words Miss Lyte had used. How they jarred upon his finer sense of duty to one who had given him love, that priceless, that inestimable boon, the sweet, odorous breath of a virgin flower, in return for which he had turned and trampled upon it! Right! What a righteous act to offer to the powers above! Let us hope the anguish of his soul atoned in some little measure for the cruel wrong which he knew that he had done to avoid the risk of doing a still greater wrong to that innocent soul. He would not answer this ghostly approbation. Even a spiritual adviser cannot gauge a lover's sensitive conscience, nor analyse the quality of his grief.

After a while he said, as if speaking in a dream: 'She is going away in a day or two to spend a month with my aunt. There will be time for her wound to heal: eh, Key?'

'I think so,' said the casuist, wishing to console his friend.

'You *don't* think so,' retorted the penitent, with savage perversity. 'It is cowardly, cold-blooded cruelty; and you know it. I struck her unmanly, foully.'

There he paused for a few moments, and then cried aloud in his agony, 'My love! my love!' unconsciously using the very words with which Janet had given vent to her own unconquerable passion.

The ecclesiastic was genuinely moved at this display; for he knew this man to be strong and resolute, unwont to be mastered by turbulent emotions. He waited till the great wave of passion had rolled by, and then said gravely: 'As God is my judge, and will hold me to account for any unnecessary suffering which I may cause his children, I believe that

He will give her strength to bear this heavy affliction. And your own conscience tells you it was better to speak now.'

But Mr. Lane had no patience or courtesy left. 'Let conscience go, then,' he exclaimed. 'I've had too much of it. Let me feel like flesh and blood for once!'

For a few moments nature seemed to triumph in the expression of his face, which almost betokened the consummate abandonment of principle and all else to victorious love. But before this climax was reached a quick shudder convulsed his frame, like a movement in still water coming whence none can tell. Again the flinty aspect of introspective self-control darkened that wilder flash of passion, and Mr. Lane stood calm and strong.

The divine understood the conflict that was being waged within him, and respected it.

'Never mind what I say, Key,' Mr. Lane resumed quietly. 'I have a cross of the Malay in my blood, you know, and it will break out now and then.'

'But I do mind what you feel,' the divine replied. 'The battle is for the strong, my friend, and the victor's crown of eternal laurel.'

As soon as he was satisfied of his friend's recovered composure, Mr. Key asked several questions about the way in which Miss Lyte had received him, and the extent of her knowledge in his affairs. Mr. Lane satisfied his inquiries, and, indeed, had a most satisfactory report to make on this subject. Baily's dishonest behaviour had shaken the lady's belief in his version of a certain old and grievous story, and only on this very morning she had received a letter from the Dowager Lady Balbry which disposed her to extend a greater lenience to her nephew

than he had ever hoped to receive at the hands of man or woman in his proper and original person as Bedford Lyte. Of course the reader is aware by this time (if, indeed, the veil has not been transparent throughout) that Mr. Lane and Bedford Lyte are one and the same person; but it suits the exigencies of the story to retain the fictitious name which he has borne so long, and by which alone several of our *dramatis personæ* knew him to the end. He appeared, however, to derive little consolation from his relative's generosity. When a mortal and agonising wound is rankling in the breast, the sufferer would almost rather receive stabs in other places than have his insignificant wounds dressed and bandaged. These small alleviations only seem to mock the greater malady which they are powerless to assail.

When this conversation was brought to a close, Mr. Lane went away alone, much to Key's disappointment, for the ecclesiastic had conceived a hearty friendship for the Assassin, and feared that Mr. Lane's purpose was to shut himself up, and be alone with his sorrow.

This apprehension was warranted by the event, for the rector saw nothing of his parishioner during the next two days, and on the evening of the second old Ada came to him after even-song with a pitiful tale. 'Master has a-shut hisself up with them dratted birds,' she said, 'and he won't let me nor Mr. Graves come a-nigh him, and he ain't had bite nor sup sin' he came back from London; and deary me, a-deary!'

Two high festivals of the Church! and a Christian man not take bite nor sup from St. John's morn till the day after the Holy Innocents!

The Reverend Cyprian was amazed.

(To be continued.)

MY VALENTINE.

HOW, prithee, shall I woo my Love—
My Valentine?

By MISSIVE sweet
And scented as the airs that rove
Around her bow'r
At evening hour,
And vie in haste to kiss her feet !

Or with FOND HOPES—
As rosy-hued
As my Celia's damask cheek—
When with blushes scarce subdued
In maiden pride
She turns aside
Whene'er my love I would outspcak !

With RICHES—
Golden as her hair
Where envious sunbeams frequent play,
Tho' fain, uncertain to rest where
Midst locks so bright
Their borrow'd light
Must die, or living pass away !

Or woo her with a CORONET—
Rare jewels,
Bright as her pure eyes,
Which peep beneath their lashes wet,
In coyest fear
Lest Love appear
To claim their glances for his prize.

Or suppliant, her PITY move
With tears for my forlorn estate ;
Such pity near akin to love.
Ah, happy swain,
Would she but deign
With my unworthiness to mate !

No ! None of these will I address
To her, my true-lov'd Valentine !
But with a longing tenderness
I'll seek her bow'r,
At twilight hour,
And boldly claim to call her mine !

There my LOVE alone I'll plead,
While Faith and Truth shall witness bear,
For Honours, Riches, I've no need ;
By Cupid arm'd
I'll rise unharm'd
From stubborn conflict with Despair.

And tho' no word to me she say,
I'll know by one sweet, tender sign
That she for ever, day by day,
Thro' good and ill
Will love me still,
My own true-hearted Valentine !

H. FRITH.

ON SOME ILLUSTRATED GIFT BOOKS.

BY HENRY BLACKBURN.

WHEN the capricious gonius of Fashion who presides over the movements of London Society suddenly takes into her head to step back a few centuries,—and going to an old cabinet, selects first a high-heeled shoe, next a ruff, and next a piece of hand embroidery as old-looking and faded in colour as Queen Matilda's Bayeux tapestry—it is not to be wondered at that the modern drawing-room belle has an antique look, and that her surroundings should partake somewhat of the spirit of a past age.

It is also not to be wondered at that the books on her table should change with the fashion, and that her favourite volumes in 1875 should reflect in some shape the art of old times. Only a few years ago an illustrated gift book was resplendent with colour, both within and without, and publishers vied with each other in producing costly books of the butterfly order, designed and often illustrated in colours by daring artists.

Looking at some of the favourite volumes which have been put forth during the last few months, one must be struck with the soberness of their aspect and general sterling qualities of their contents. Taking advantage of the photographic processes for reproducing works by the old masters in perfect facsimile—and cultivating a revived taste for etching by presenting to the English public such graceful work as a few years ago was confined to publications like the '*Gazette des Beaux Arts*'—publishers are following a fashion which must be gratifying to all true lovers of art.

One of the most refined and artistic books of the year is the

last volume of the 'Portfolio,' edited by P. G. Hamerton (Seeley and Co.), containing examples of nearly every form of excellence in illustration in black and white. Here are reproductions in etching of pictures in the National Gallery, and of other well-known paintings, also original designs by famous artists, principally of the foreign schools. We are able in one volume to contrast such work as the bold study of a Breton peasant by Legros, in dry-point etching, with the delicate touch of Hedouin, or the colour of Greux. There are some admirable portraits of Rembrandt, Gainsborough, and others, and an etching by Rajon of Turner's 'Fighting Téméraire' being tugged to her last berth, which is a triumph in monochrome; the grandeur and sentiment of the original being preserved in a marvellous manner. Side by side with such work as the above we are presented with some cleverly executed etchings in relief by Alfred Dawson, being sketches on the old coastline from Rye to Winchelsea. But the charm of the present volume, to many readers, will be in the editor's articles on the 'Sylvan Year,' and their accompanying illustrations. Those who have followed Mr. Hamerton in his fascinating descriptions of country life in the Val Sainte Véronique, and wondered sometimes at his enthusiasm, will be interested to read his closing words:—'All this is excellent in its way, but another year of our wood-life would turn our boy into a half savage, and unfit him for any other society than that of a weasel. Our experiment of sylvan life is not likely to be repeated except for briefer spaces.'

'The Old Masters,' by Stephen Thompson (S. Low and Co.), is a large quarto volume, containing nineteen reproductions in photography of engravings from the works of Da Vinci, Bartolommeo, Raphael, Michael Angelo, Correggio, Guido, Domenichino, Carlo Dolci, and others. The design of this volume is to illustrate European art as it flourished in the sixteenth century, leaving the works of the Venetian painters for a separate volume. The reproductions in this book are from engravings, a system of illustration which has great recommendations where faithful engravings can be obtained; but we cannot agree with Mr. Thompson in the opinion that this is generally the way to give 'the truest idea of the master's work.' Certainly we have seldom seen more worthy reproductions of works by the old masters; but the method admits of a loophole of doubt in the student's mind from which, in contemplation of a less perfect photograph from the original picture, he will generally be free. Mr. Thompson's work is altogether so important, and he is aided so liberally by his publishers, that it seems worth while to consider whether, before presenting us with the Venetian masters, a system of direct photographic reproduction might not occasionally be adopted. His greatest achievement will be to give us what he describes as 'glimpses of the painter's mind and touch, gleams of priceless worth and interest which no other method than photography can yield.'

In 'French and Flemish Pictures,' Mr. F. G. Stephens discourses learnedly on the characteristics of these two schools; on 'Gothic Art in the Low Countries,' 'The Transition Period,' the 'Revival,' the 'Afterglow,' and so on, including notes on 'Famous French Artists,' our Contemporaries.' The illus-

trations comprise examples of the works of Rembrandt, Van Eyck, Henri Leys, Watteau, Greuze, Brion, Meissonier, Troyon, Veyrasat, and Henrietta Browne, executed in the best style of French contemporary etching. Amongst the illustrated books of the season we could point to none more worthy of a place on our table from its intrinsic worth, and none more difficult for the unlearned to read. 'French and Flemish Pictures,' being presented as a drawing-room gift book, the reader is scarcely in the frame of mind to master a dissertation on the influence of Greek art in Southern Italy in the seventeenth century. Here we picture our modern belle putting down the book with a sigh at her want of comprehension!

'Our British Landscape Painters, from Samuel Scott to David Cox,' illustrated by sixteen engravings on steel, and by biographical notices by W. B. Scott (Virtue and Co.), is another valuable contribution to the list of works on art, but written in a more popular style. The steel engravings from paintings by Samuel Scott, Wilson, Gainsborough, Louthborough, Ward, Turner, Constable, Danby, Clarkson Stanfield, Roberts, Harding, Creswick, Callcott Nasmyth, and David Cox, are generally excellent, and the accompanying letterpress gives a large amount of information in an entertaining form, for which some drawing-room readers will be thankful. Amongst the familiar pictures is a curious view of 'Old Hyde Park,' by Patrick Nasmyth, brother of James Nasmyth, the inventor of the steam-hammer. 'The British School of Sculpture,' by the same author (Virtue and Co.), is a similar volume, containing examples of the works of Flaxman, Wyon, Chantrey, Westmacott, Gib-

son, and others. There are in all twenty engravings and fifty woodcuts.

When we have stated that another large volume of engravings is devoted to examples from the Italian masters of the seventeenth century, we shall have said enough to indicate that the taste for books on art in its best period seems reviving amongst us; and that, in spite of the variety of books and the progress of the art of colour printing, what seems to attract us most in 1875 is the same steel engraving which caused expressions of delight from our grandmothers in the last century.

Let us now turn to some modern work which the crowd of 'old masters' should not altogether thrust aside. 'Summer Etchings in Colorado,' by Mrs. Greator, comes to us from America full of original sketches and descriptions of life in a new colony. It is interesting not only for its artistic etchings of scenery in the 'Great West,' but also from a literary point of view. Here is a word picture on the railway journey between New York and Colorado: 'Another day and we are whirled over the prairies by steam. The prairie-grass is fresh and green after the storm, and the prairie-dogs, after being confined to the house by bad weather, come out for an airing, watching the dragon-engine and train from their hilly seats; the youthful and timid of the community dive downstairs as the monster approaches, the old and wise stay watching it gravely. Antelopes dart along trying to race with the engine. The herds of cattle are most excited by the passing train; many a one has been sacrificed to a too daring spirit, and leaves whitening bones along the track. Nearer and nearer we come in sight of the Rocky Mountains.

Every tint and hue of colour they have gathered into their great heart, and every change in the air and sky is reflected deep and strong on their mighty sides and peaks, from deepest purple to white gleaming silver. It is a fitting boundary line to the earth-ocean which we have passed over for five days and nights of travel since we left New York. We descend from the cars in the midst of the busy, intensely-living new city of Denver; we have crossed the plains and are really in the Great Far West.'

In the same volume, Grace Greenwood, an American authoress, gives a lively picture of summer life in this colony, dating her letter from Manitou:—"From the windows of the principal hotel of Manitou, now the most fashionable and delightful watering-place of Colorado, I look out this summer afternoon on the scene of Brevet Captain Frémont's lonely evening ride of thirty years ago. How changed, and yet unchanged, the lovely valley and its surroundings! Nature holds her own wonderfully, but 'the noble savage'—encounters with whom added such pleasing variety to Frémont's expedition—has disappeared from the sacred waters. His wigwam is pitched no more on the banks of the Fountain, but instead we see the tent of the artist and the 'camper.' Even the grizzly bear has departed; the only specimen we have is sadly degenerate, having been brought up by hand, and taught to play tricks with a pack of cards. Could those brave explorers whose camp-fires lighted up the grand glooms of this lovely, once lonely, valley come back to the springs and banks of the Fountain to-day, would they like the picture? They would see hotels, cottages, bath-houses, summer-houses, and bowling alleys. They would see stage-

coaches, Saratoga trunks, pianos, and fiddles. The inspiring war-whoop is silenced for ever, for the world is storming the Rocky Mountains.

Of the publishing of books of travel there seems no end. Here is a large quarto volume, profusely illustrated, describing 'The Bavarian Highlands and the Salzkammergut' (Chapman and Hall), with a quaint account of 'the habits and manners of the hunters, poachers, and peasantry of these districts,' by Herman Schmid and Karl Stieler, including notes on the animal and vegetable world. The engravings are unequal, but some are very remarkable for their boldness and for the fidelity with which the scenery of the Bavarian highlands is depicted. We doubt whether any book has given so many interesting details of the manners and customs of the peasantry, or more graphic pictures of life on the mountains. Herman Schmid's description of a new dance is worth attention just now, when efforts are being made to vary the monotony of the ordinary quadrille. In this dance, called the 'Schuhplattltanz,' or 'the Woodgrouse figure,' the rôle of the two sexes is simply and naturally divided. The active part is assigned to the man—he is the suitor, the leader. 'The part of the maiden is to wait. The dance begins quietly enough, and when its merry mazes are at their height the different couples waltz slowly round several times; suddenly, however, the girls desert their partners. They must not leave them when standing still—that would be a breach of etiquette—they must steal away from them unawares. The ease with which the girls slip under the uplifted arms of their partners, and the rapidity with which the dancers separate, make this a very pretty

figure; but it is succeeded by a scene of wild, almost frantic excitement. Whilst the girls are modestly dancing together the men dash roughly amongst them and form an inner circle. The music becomes louder, and the men begin to beat the time on their thighs with their great brown hands. A shrill whistling adds to the uproar. One must have seen these strapping fellows and their thick-nailed shoes to form any idea of the din. The floor rocks, the ceiling trembles; the music is as loud as the trumpets of Jericho, but it can scarcely be heard. We are blinded and deafened.' In the midst of the confusion one dancer will 'describe a wheel,' and set the windows rattling in their panes; whilst another will perform a *pas* in the air, and spring to the ground with a crash. Gradually the music becomes quieter, the trumpeters take breath—piano—pianissimo—the men return to their partners. Now comes the 'woodgrouse figure.' Crowing and whistling, each one springs to his chosen mate, whilst the latter flies from him with circling motions. As the bird spreads out his wings, so does the peasant his arms, now sinking to the ground before his partner, now springing towards her with wild gestures. At last he 'takes the maiden prisoner,' and the birds are mated. Here is an idea for professors of 'dancing and deportment!'

If any proof were wanting that for some kinds of illustration the wood-engraver's art is supreme, we could point to no better example than to Giacomelli's illustrations to 'The Insect,' by J. Michelet (Nelson and Sons). We doubt whether any popular process of illustration could render with more delicacy and truth, and with more tender gradations of tone, these drawings of bird and insect

life. Certainly no better engravings of the kind have been put forth this year. M. Michelet's books on natural history are well known, and the 'Insect' is one of the four remarkable works for which he is famous. 'The History of the Robin,' by Mrs. Trimmer, is also issued again, after a lapse of sixty years, with seventy illustrations by the same artist, Giacomelli.

'Fair Lusitania,' by Lady Jackson (Bentley and Son), is a sumptuous volume of travel in Portugal, treating of a little-known, but delightful district for tourists, and bearing about it an air of *vraisemblance* which, in ornamental books of travel, is rather unusual. Portugal is still regarded by Englishmen chiefly from a commercial point of view; it is refreshing, therefore, to be reminded of its natural beauties, and to visit it in company with an author who has a keen eye for the picturesque. Camillo Branco, the novelist, summed up the popular estimate of Portugal long ago in a few words. 'It is not a country one visits for pleasure,' he says. 'The Tagus is a gauzy veil, hiding the face of an ugly woman. Lisbon is a disappointment; it has neither monuments nor magnificence, neither civilisation nor society, and the country remains just as Byron left it—a land of barbarians in frock-coats and beaver hats.'

And yet we have only to turn over the pages of Lady Jackson's volume to discover that 'this small nation, which is but little in vogue,' is full of interest, and the country really only half explored. We know its kind-hearted, hospitable people, and Lisbon is familiar enough; but who has wandered on the mysterious western shores that face the Atlantic, or travelled in search of the picturesque, along the valleys of the

Douro, the Tagus, or the Mondego? Here is work enough for the artist, judging from the twenty elaborate engravings with which 'Fair Lusitania' is furnished.

M. Gustave Doré's talent for depicting grand and imaginative landscape has seldom been shown more forcibly than in his illustrations to Chateaubriand's 'Atala.' The elaborate edition just issued by Messrs. Cassell contains thirty engravings, in which there are some scenes of extraordinary power. In fact it would be surprising if it were otherwise, when the scenery of the Mississippi and the Gulf of Mexico is depicted by the author in such glowing and suggestive words as the following: 'The Mississippi is the Nile of these deserts. At intervals the swollen river raises its voice whilst passing over sandbanks and resisting heaps, and spreads its overflowing waters around the colonnades of the forests and the pyramids of Indian tombs.' But grace is always united to splendour in the scenes of nature. Whilst the mid-stream bears away towards the sea the dead trunks of pine-trees and oaks, the lateral currents on either side convey along the shores floating islands of pistia- and nénphars, whose large yellow roses stand out like pavilions. Green serpents, blue herons, pink flamingoes, and dark crocodiles embark as passengers on these rafts of flowers—the brilliant colony unfolding to the wind its golden sails. Such a vivid impression of tropical beauty and grandeur in nature has seldom been presented as a Christmas gift book. In Doré's 'Atala' the interest is in landscape alone; the dramatic personæ we would rather have had left to the imagination.

Amongst the brightest and most amusing books for children is the late Tom Hood's story called

'From Nowhere to the North Pole' (Chatto and Windus). It should have an exceptional interest for the readers of 'London Society,' for those who contribute to its pages have done some of the best work on this magazine; the names of both author and artists are familiar to us. 'Noah's Arkæological Narrative,' as it is called, is written in the author's happiest vein, but at the same time owes much of its brightness and originality to the fancy of the artists, E. C. Barnes and W. Brunton, and to the excellent engravings by the Brothers Dalziel. Whether the 'hobgoblins' in the book are good for young minds to dwell upon we will not inquire too closely, but consider it mainly from a literary point of view. Tom Hood had a pet project, which he mentioned to the present writer years ago, for a children's book to be called 'Toys of the World.' The idea was a good one, and nobody would have carried it out better than Hood, whose happiest thoughts and best qualities displayed themselves in catering for children. All we have left of his 'Toys of the World' appears in the book before us. Frank, the hero of the story, has a birthday and an embarrassing number of presents, amongst them a Noah's ark. 'The animals were of the usually distracting proportions. The elephants only came up to Noah's waist, whilst the raven was as large as the lion, who, mane and all, was no taller than the cock. The foxes took a great deal of persuasion to stand up in the procession, and fell down whenever Frank was not looking. Such, however, as naturalists assure us, is the artful manner of foxes.' The following verses have the old familiar ring. Ham, the poet of the Noachian family, is supposed to have written them on hearing that Frank intended to 'cut up

the Noah Family into cribbage pegs!'

'The heart of wood
Is kind and good,
The wooden heart is bad.
Our hearts refuse
To utter views
Like yours, my little lad.

For heart of wood does what it should,
but wooden, what it shouldn't;
And wood would—wood *would*, but
wooden—wooden *wouldn't*.'

Another contributor to the pages of 'London Society' has put forth a very attractive book called 'Our Autumn Holiday on French Rivers' (Bradbury and Co.), which, from an artistic point of view, appears to deserve more recognition than it has yet received. Written in a pleasant holiday spirit by J. L. Molloy, the well-known composer, and purporting only to contain 'remembrances of a six weeks' holiday on French rivers,' it gives us life-like pictures of foreign scenes. The enterprise was a novel one—that of taking a four-oared outrigger up the Seine and down the Loire: the undertaking required exceptional preparation and exceptional qualifications on the part of the crew, including a large stock of pluck and good-humour. The little craft the 'Marie' proved of course too light for the work, and was turned over in the Seine near Rouen; the weather was continually wet, and the canal on which they intended to row to communicate with the Loire was closed for repairs. Nevertheless the journey was made and enjoyed. The adventures *en route* are described with infinite zest, and with a sense of fun and enjoyment which is delightful. The crew were loyal to the 'Marie' from the day when her 'delicate ribs grew under skilful hands, and her beautiful proportions gradually developed,' until there was 'many a rent and tatter in her little flag of dark

blue silk.' For details of the route we refer the reader to the book itself. The following, however, is a picturesque description of the old inn at Grand Andelys, which will serve to give an idea of the spirit of the party:

Bow (the artist of the crew) declared it was enough to drive any one wild with delight. 'It almost took away our breath. I wonder what Joe Willet would have thought of it!'

Wide as the difference was in works of art, old paintings and *objets de vertu*, there was something that at the first glance brought back to mind the inn in 'Barnaby Rudge,' with old Willet in the chimney-corner and little Dolly Varden on the threshold. It would have taken many days to find out all the treasures of the place. It was more of a museum than an inn, only that it had the comfort of the latter. Out of the courtyard—itsself a quaint picture, with its odd stairways, old diligences with yellow panels, and flowers in every window overhead—you went up some curiously-wrought steps to the 'grand salon.' A heavy oak ceiling of rich dark colour with transverse beams, one huge beam in the centre; the doorway let in to an oak turret rising from the floor, and disappearing through the ceiling in an open fretwork. A little dash of stained window in an odd corner, through which the sun came, and painted its picture on the dark wall. Just below it a rare clock of Louis XV., and then a host of curiosities endless as they were interesting. Paintings of still life, some of great value; old Rembrandt and Rubens heads, antique jewelled watches, eastern daggers, bits of old tapestry and solemn high-backed chairs.

There was a strange fire-place in the kitchen, and a staircase

where you could well spend an afternoon up and down its windings—every side of the walls covered with paintings, statuettes and china—leading to two bed-rooms that were perfectly marvellous. The first was a nest of wondrous tapestry. On one side a young girl swinging between two oak-trees, attended by two courtiers of the time of François I.; on the right an archery meeting exquisitely worked; on the left a river landscape, with figures on a terrace. Three massive ebony cabinets standing out against the deep red hangings of the wall; a table inlaid with pearl and lapis-lazuli; vases of malachite, costly nick-nacks and cabinet pictures that might have been by Watteau, Patel, Horace Vernet or Paul Delaroche.

'At the risk of irreverence to these wonderful chairs I must really sit down' says Stroke, the historian of the party, and then follows a sketch by Linley Sambourne of a French bedroom with the incongruous figure of a rowing man apparently asleep in the middle. The general aspect of this room is indicated with marvellous truth, even to the suggestion of the polished floor shown by a few touches in pencil.

But in spite of the interest of the 'Grand Cerf' at Andelys, with which many readers are doubtless already familiar, the truth must be confessed, our rowing party breathe more freely out of doors. In a page or two we are again on the river, or in it, or in the open country, taking a run; or, for variety's sake, seated beside the driver of a fiacre, who compliments his horse with the epithets of *sacré grand-fils de Bismarck*, or, *pomme de terre de Von Moltke!*

Of the freshness of style and abounding fun in this volume we can give little idea, nor is it neces-

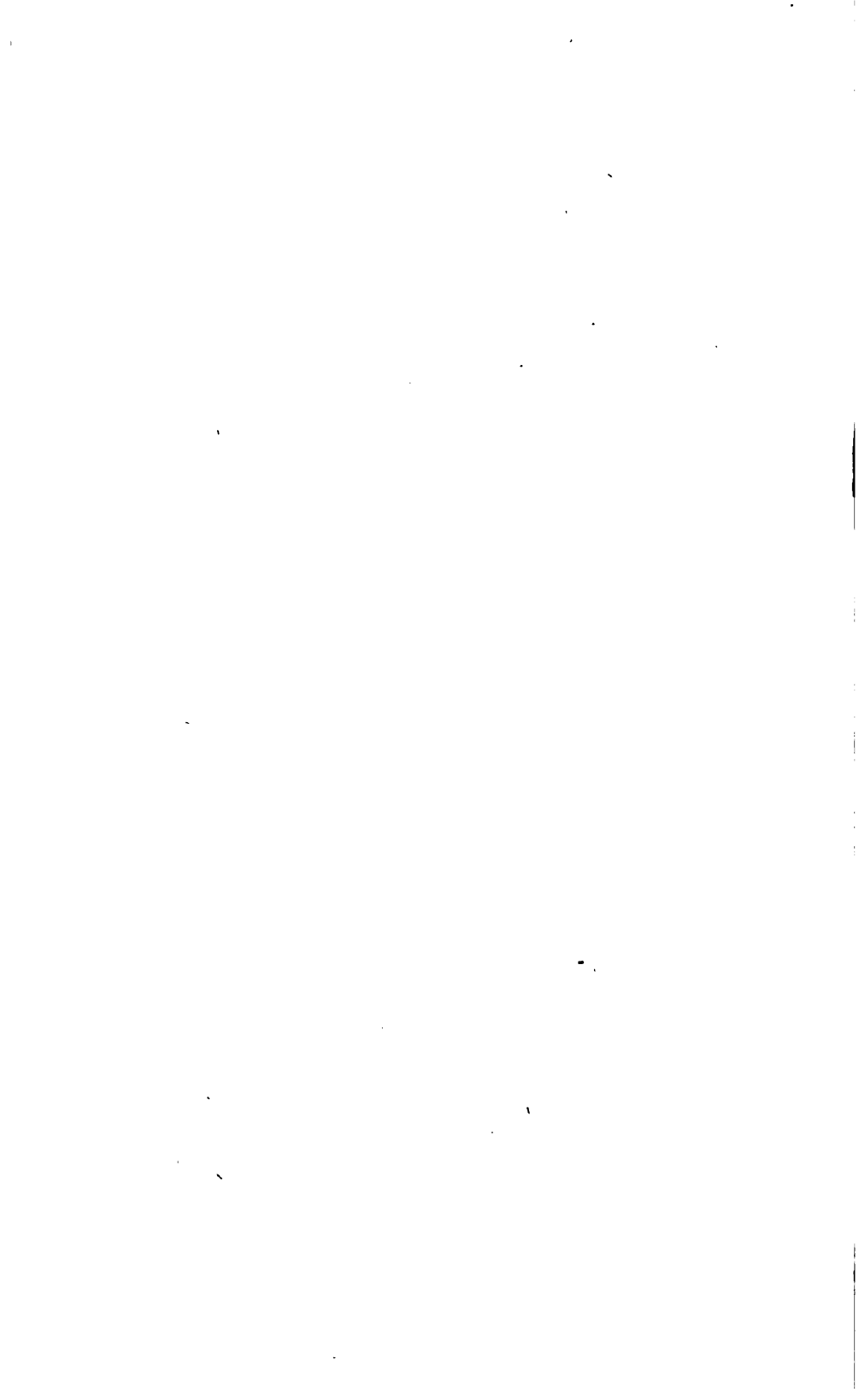
sary to notice certain literary defects; but in a notice of *Illustrated Books* we could hardly point to one containing more original or effective engravings, in which the artist has been ably seconded, in his endeavour to give broad effects in a few lines, by the wood-engraver's art. There are some views in our '*Autumn Holiday on French Rivers*,' notably on the Loire in evening light, where the little '*Marie*' is seen 'shooting over a bed of pebbles' as the sun goes down, that exhibit the '*Punch*' artist's powers under a new aspect.

We cannot do better than compare with the illustrations to this volume the very opposite treatment of river scenery in Mr. Robertson's '*Life on the Upper Thames*' (Virtue and Co.), in which elaboration and technical skill in engraving have seldom been surpassed. This latter is a

dainty volume, containing some exquisite river effects. The contrast between these two volumes is this, that in the former the artist, and in the latter the engraver, seems to have had the upper hand.

'*Merry Elves*' (Seeley and Co.), illustrated by C. O. Murray, is a little book of adventures in Fairyland which deserves special notice for the graceful fancy of the artist. This artist's drawings are also familiar to our readers, but never, perhaps, in such a bright, comic vein. The '*Story of a Toadstool*' is a happy thought, and the picture of two little elves and a toad taking a 'header' together is a bit of genuine fun. The drawings are produced by a new process of illustration in relief, which is interesting from the freedom it imparts to the artist's work when he has once mastered its technicalities.







Drawn by Dower Wilson.]

‘THE NEW PALETTE-HOLDER—PATENTED.’
A HINT TO LADY ARTISTS.



GASTRONOMICAL RAMBLES.

By 'SARCELLE.'

NO. I.—SLIGHTLY SWINDLED AT SHEPPERTON.

TRULY, I have some reason to consider myself an ill-used individual. Having projected certain rambles in search of that great desideratum, wholesome and cheap food, and at the same time of mental *pabulum* for the discriminating portion of the British public, my first ramble led me, for the first time, to that *ultima Thule* of Middlesex called Shepperton, where I hoped to allure from the pellucid waters of the Thames sundry and divers of its finny inhabitants, and thus kill two birds with one stone. (That sounds uncommonly like a bull. Faith, haven't I just returned from Ireland?) But a *confrère* of the quill, *mirabile dictu*, discovered Shepperton on the same day—and, with an eloquence and humour which I cannot hope to imitate for another half century at least, 'O Pescator dell' Onda' (for thus Venetianly does he designate himself) describes, in the pages of 'our gushing contemporary,' Shepperton, its people, its hostelries, its visitors, its waters, its fish, its fishermen, and its manners and customs generally. But, stay, there is a little hostelry which he does *not* describe—thrice lucky Pescator—he entered not the 'Marlingspike.' How this extraordinarily nautical name can have come to be conferred on a little inland inn is a marvel to me. I am somewhat inclined to connect it with the presence, in a neighbouring boatyard, of an undoubted old sea-dog, bronzed as to his face, keen-eyed, grizzly-bearded, who has been nearly all round the world, and after many a hair-

breadth 'scape, and many a buffeting from rude Boreas and Father Neptune, has returned to spend the remainder of his life among punts and out-riggers in peaceful Shepperton. However, it is matter of but slight importance to the subject of the present sketch whether my nautical friend, or 'any other man,' was concerned in the nomenclature of the 'Marlingspike.'

What is more to the purpose is, that, on that Saturday afternoon, accompanied by another Rambler, I entered its hospitable portals. Over the bar I observed one of the largest, but at the same time mangiest stuffed barbel that ever inspired a City clerk out for the day with ardent hopes of terrific tussles with similar monsters, destined soon to be dispelled by a *bleak* reality of small fry. Behind the bar stood a young lady who evidently considered herself a 'barbelle' (I have misgivings as to the originality of that atrocious pun). She was elaborately dressed, and rather pretty. Also, she charged us a shilling each for brandy and soda. We wanted 'just a snack' of something cold previous to starting on a little fishing excursion under the auspices of the sea-faring character above mentioned. This siren of Shepperton suggested cold beef. We had some (very little, but that does not matter). Cold beef for two; pickles for two; bread for two; cheese for one. That's all, barring the fluids. We had a pint of ale each, but it was such abominable ale that my fellow-Rambler straightway ordered his to be taken away

and a pint bottle of his beloved Bass to be brought. But the writer of this modest narrative, having rambled exceedingly, and fortified his stomach by imbibing much bad beer, and many other bad beverages in various parts of this wicked world, swallowed his pint of poison (slow) and 'made no sign.' Then we arose from the little table, and while waiting to know what we had to pay, inspected some of the many decorative curiosities which adorned the walls. There was a melancholy and mouldy trout, a worthy pendant to the mangy barbel; and a very extraordinary composition of cunning calligraphy setting forth, in ancient rhyme, the long and well-spent life of a lady whose signature was not appended, because the final event chronicled was her death; but who appeared, as far as we could make out from such enigmatical and startling statements as—

'Five times five years I lived a virgin's life;

Ten times five years I was a virtuous wife—'

from the immense period during which she was a 'widow chaste,' and the number of kings, queens, republics, &c., she is said to have seen—to have rivalled the ages ascribed to the early patriarchs. We were about commencing the abstruse mental exercises necessary to arrive at a correct result, when the belle of the bar approached us and gave us the awful information that we had six shillings and tenpence to pay. We paid it, marched out of the house, stared at one another, and found the enormity of the imposition to be quite amusing, so we laughed long and loud.

But, gentle reader, learn a moral from this first ramble, and if you are economically disposed—as in these evil days of strikes and dear

meat, and dearer coals, who amongst us does not feel compelled to be?—ever avoid the 'Marlingspike' at Shepperton, unless it be for a simple 'glass of bitter' at the bar, and I really cannot recommend the 'bitter.'

NO. II.—MARVELS AT MUGGERIDGE'S.

On the day after my return from Shepperton, a poorer, a 'sadder, yet a wiser man,' I was strolling, with the same companion, up the Strand. We had rambled some distance, and thirst and hunger began to be pleasingly felt. I say *pleasingly*, because there were ample means at hand of gratifying both. Into a well-known Spanish wine-shop we went first, and some capital Spanish port was served to us in those pretty and capacious Spanish tumblers; also we had each three magnificent Spanish olives, of portentous size and excellent flavour: total, wine and olives for two, tenpence.

Then we paused before Muggeridge's, which was 'convenient,' as Paddy would say, to our wine-shop, and looked at his bill of fare. Truly it was an astounding one: there was, 'Prairie-hen, whole bird, 10d.; hashed venison, 9d.; hashed duck, 10d.,' and similar marvels of cheapness. We looked at one another and hesitated on the threshold. The same idea was in both our minds: surely it would be 'cheap and nasty'? In this our hesitation we determined to appeal to Dame Fortune; in other words, the toss up of a shilling decided us to enter Muggeridge's. We beheld a long room with a low ceiling, divided into lots of cosy little compartments to hold two or four diners. Odours floated about the place which were by no means disagreeable. We took our seats, a civil waiter ap-

proached us: we demanded the prairie-fowl. I had almost said the 'prairie-flower,' bethinking me of Rosalie. He said there wasn't any left. This was bad news, for as it was early in the season, only the end of July, in fact, we were anxious to ascertain what strange bird this could be, and whence it came. However, we ordered hashed duck and venison. They brought us these in elegant dishes of Teutonic silver, and the plates were almost red-hot. So far, so good. My companion observed that he didn't know what meat he had got, it might be venison, or it might be anything, but it was very good, and there was a very liberal supply of it. My duck was certainly a palmiped bird of that genus; my silver dish contained two large legs, terminated by unmistakable web-feet; some excellent gravy, and a liberal allowance of green peas. It was all very good. I had some potatoes as well, and a pint of bitter ale, and my bill was one and fourpence! My fellow-rambler, ever mindful of the humanising influence of little luxuries, had ordered, in addition to his beer, a half-pint bottle of champagne. What extravagance! Well, it was only a shilling, and it held about two glasses and a half; so it could not be called dear. And it was just about the same sort of 'fizz' as one gets at ordinary evening parties. My comrade's bill came to half-a-crown. We both paid, and departed down the Strand

'In that peaceful frame of mind,
Consequent on having dined.'

(I believe those lines are original. I don't know any more.) But still we were not happy! We had not solved the mystery of the prairie-bird. So we determined to return to Muggeridge's another day. We did return, at an earlier

hour than before. The hours during which the great Muggeridge supplies cheap delicacies to the hungry public of the Strand are twelve to eight. On the previous day we had gone there at six, but on this, the day for the bird of the prairie, we entered those portals at two, having previously satisfied ourselves, by inspection of the big bill of fare in the window, that not only did 'prairie-hen' figure therein, but also 'ptarmigan' at 9d. and 10d. respectively, with the encouraging note 'whole bird.'

On cross-examining the waiter, we found his notions of ornithology and geography lamentably vague, but he explained to us that School Boards had not yet been invented in the days of his happy childhood, and we pardoned him. Still he was confused and confusing. He wasn't sure, but believed ptarmigan and prairie-hen were both the same bird, and he thought they came from 'foreign parts somewhere.' 'Hot weather, eh?' 'Rather high, aren't they?' we hazarded.

'Igh, sir! No, sir. Leastways, not too 'igh, sir; just nice game flavour, sir!' Again we looked at each other, hesitatingly, and read in those looks a mutual conviction that *one* martyr in the cause of science would be enough, so we ordered 'one prairie-hen' and 'one roast duck.' Soon, after an interval of dread expectation, the usual silver dishes were seen coming our way, preceded by an odour of the game, gamey, and accompanied by a vast swarm of buzzing flies. One cover was removed. There was the 'whole bird,' and a very black, emaciated-looking bird he was, with long, thin, weird-looking black legs and wings which minutely resembled them. He was accompanied by bread-sauce, which somehow vaguely suggested gentles

and ground-bait. He *was* high, very much so indeed. I think he had died in America from sun-stroke, and had a long and hot voyage across the Atlantic. In fact, his odours reminded me so unpleasantly of a certain corpse, whose relatives, from motives of mistaken respect, had allowed the defunct to remain in the next bedroom to mine till he became most aggressively decomposed, that I refused to partake of the strange bird. My brave comrade took him, and pronounced him good. And his price, bread-sauce included, was only ninepence! But we could form no idea what kind of bird he was, though I am a bit of a sportsman and naturalist. His legs, as I have said, were skinny and black. They also seemed to pervade the dish in a *twisty* manner in all directions, so that when I asked my friend how many legs his bird had got, he replied 'seven!' But this was the result of a first hasty glance only, and I believe the bird really had only the proper complement of legs which is well known to be allotted to an eating-house bird, *i.e.* five.

My roast duck was a great success: it *was* really the half of a moderate-sized duck, nicely roasted; and when I considered what certain female relatives had told me anent prices in poulterers' shops, I marvelled much at Muggeridge. I hardly ever care about the old British institution of 'a cut off the joint,' but I believe Muggeridge's joints are sixpence, and trustworthy; he has, moreover, very fair *entrées* at sevenpence.

But to proceed with my own experiences. I had omitted to mention two somewhat remarkable facts in connection with that awful bird the prairie-hen—which, by-the-way, I have been

calling 'he' all along in a most reprehensible manner.

Perhaps it will simplify matters to use the indefinite 'it.' Well, 'it' attracted to our table all the flies which were hovering over all the other tables in the establishment, and they disputed it fiercely with my friend. Those lucky (?) insects who succeeded in getting a taste of either bird or gravy immediately became sick and feeble, and crawled about the neighbouring tablecloth in a disgustingly helpless manner. This phenomenon inspired me with fears for the safety of my friend; but more than a week has now elapsed since his experiment, and he is very well, thank you.

My next visit to Muggeridge's was paid alone. I was going to a neighbouring little theatre to see a little French play, 'Le Canard à Trois Becs.' Bah! What is 'a duck with three bills,' compared to 'a prairie-hen with five legs'? But, no matter, I only wanted a glass of sherry and bitters, and a little bit of fish. I got a very large glass of the former. 'Salmon and lobster-sauce' was down in the bill at one shilling. It was the most expensive thing at Muggeridge's. I ordered it. There came a really very fine piece of excellent fresh salmon (I am very particular about my fish, and it was undeniably good). The lobster-sauce was dubious. It was melted butter with a pinky-brown colouring, and the suspicion of a flavour of some vague crustacean. Certainly there were no pieces of lobster in it. But it had no *objectionable* taste. And for the third time I was very well satisfied with my dinner at Muggeridge's—and the price thereof—which, including sherry and bitters, salmon, sauce, bread, and waiter, was eighteenpence. From this time forth we

(not the editorial or literary 'we,' but my friend and self) used always to make a point of looking at Muggeridge's bill as we passed, in search of what Professor Pepper advertises as 'The New and the Wonderful.' One day we saw something we could not resist—'West India Pepper-pot, 7d.' Neither of us had ever tasted this, but we both liked hot and tasty things; moreover, we had heard and read much of this great West Indian 'institution'—how one 'pepper-pot' would be kept going for years, the peppery and spicy nature of the ingredients preventing it from going bad, while the members of the family were wont to give their personal superintendence to the periodical addition of new meats and fresh condiments, till at last it culminated in a condition of ambrosial and irresistible culinary perfection. But, mindful of all this, mindful, also, that certain of the ingredients (notably the indispensable 'cassarepe') are likely to be very expensive in England, we were very doubtful as to what kind of pepper-pot this genius of the Strand could contrive to give us for sevenpence.

But we were anxious to find out for our own benefit, and that of others; so, having previously fortified ourselves next door with a glass of 'Priorato,' and an olive or two, we entered one of the well-known little boxes, and, with a reckless confidence in an eatable result, both ordered 'pepper-pot.' When it came—in silver dishes, of course—it smelt uncommonly nice, looked very appetizing, and tasted very good indeed, but it was *not* 'pepper-pot.' No, it was simply a very good, tolerably hot curry, with lots of pickles in it; and I appeal to any West Indian to say whether it does not take a good deal more

than that to constitute real 'pepper-pot.'

Still, we were not much disappointed, for it was very good indeed. Then we committed a fatal error. We ordered something which was not down in the bill of fare—anchovy toast! The vague waiter said he didn't know, but he would go and see if it could be managed. He returned, and announced that it could. We said, 'Manage it, then!' and drank some beer, and waited. Presently the covers were lifted off two fresh silver dishes; and then, oh, horror! what is this? An immense round of toast, over which has been thickly poured some horrible liquid—something between melted butter, toasted cheese, and glue! It has a faint pinky-brown tinge, but no smell or taste of anchovy.

I venture to taste a tiny mite off one corner; there is not the faintest suspicion of anchovy, but it vaguely reminds me of my lobster-sauce a few days ago, only it is much nastier.

The waiter himself looks guilty and scared. I think he expects to have it in his face. But we have had *something* good to eat, so we are not passionate; and, 'more in sorrow than in anger,' we ask him, 'What do you call this?' 'Anchovy toast, sir.' 'Then where the deuce are the anchovies?' Waiter hesitates; then says, feebly, 'Well, you know, sir, there's two kinds of anchovy toast, one made with the fish, and the other with the paste, sir.' 'And this is neither of them. There is not a bit of paste, even, in that horrible slush of stale melted butter. There may have been one drop of anchovy-sauce put in it, but that doesn't constitute anchovy toast. Take it away immediately.' 'I'm very sorry, sir——' 'Take it away.' The horrible mess was

removed, and we departed down the Strand in melancholy mood, having learnt a moral, which I commend to my readers, in the hope that it may spare them much suffering. At Muggeridge's never order anything which is not down in the bill of fare; and, in strange places generally, never order anchovy toast when the waiter only 'thinks it can be managed.'

Undeterred by the horrible recollection of the anchovy toast, reflecting that we had brought that affliction on ourselves by our own rashness, we again visited Muggeridge's in search of further marvels or mysteries. 'Pepper-pot' was again in the bill of fare. Now we had a grateful recollection of a certain curry that had figured under that name; so soon again was 'pepper-pot' placed before us in the well-known German silver dish. Alas! what a falling off was there! There was a plenty of little bits of uncertain meat indeed, but a total insufficiency of curry-powder and general flavouring. It was mild and insipid in the extreme. But, as we were hungry, we consumed the whole of it, and then boldly ordered 'roast fowl and sausage' (10*d.*). It came—it was mysterious—it was liberally supplied with a rich, thick, brown gravy, which we immediately identified with the gravy of some 'hashed mutton and peas' (7*d.*)—cheap enough; but containing only fifteen peas—we counted them carefully. Moreover, a third rambler identified it

with the gravy of 'roast venison,' and of 'grouse.' It was, therefore, no unfair inference that the same gravy served for an indefinite number of various dishes; and, indeed, I fancied that this gravy differed slightly in colour, but hardly at all in flavour, from the lobster-sauce which had been supplied with my salmon, and from the mysterious and glutinous fluid which had been poured over our 'anchovy toast.'

So much for the gravy. The roast fowl was *high*—undeniably high—an estimable quality in the grouse or partridge, when not carried to excess, but by no means desirable in domestic *gallinaceæ*. Its flavour reminded me considerably of birds which had figured in Muggeridge's bill of fare as 'grouse' and 'prairie-fowl,' and it dawned upon me, as an unpleasant possibility, that the artful Muggeridge *might* contrive to make feathered bipeds of the same genus and species, when kept to the verge of commencing putrefaction, do duty for individuals of widely distinct families. And so, pondering these things deeply, we left; and our stroll down the Strand was somewhat saddened; and we had to apply to a golden-haired girl at the bar of the Jollity Theatre *restaurant* for two 'threes of pale brandy, neat,' to restore our internal equilibrium. But if the reader can gather from our experiences what to eat and what to avoid, should he determine to visit Muggeridge's, we shall not have suffered in vain.





Drawn by H. Furness.

A DREAM OF ST. VALENTINE'S DAY.



OPEN! SESAME!

BY FLORENCE MARRYAT (MRS. ROSS-CHURCH), AUTHOR OF 'LOVE'S CONFLICT,'
'NO INTENTIONS,' ETC., ETC.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

'WHO SAID THAT I WAS JEALOUS?'

BY Christmas Lord and Lady Valence are again at the Castle, and find a bevy of their old friends ready to welcome them home. Agatha has been busy sending out invitations in their absence, and Everil finds the house much fuller than she expected. General Hawke and Mr. Mildmay have accompanied Alice back to Ireland; Staunton has procured the leave he anticipated; Bulwer is there as a matter of course; and even Miss Strong has ventured across the Channel to spend a few weeks of her Christmas holidays with her old pupil. Lady Valence hardly understands what this large gathering portends, but Agatha has been used to dispense the hospitality of Castle Valence as she chooses, and has generally some unfathomable motive for her actions. Her very mode of greeting the newly-arrived couple takes Everil by surprise. The air of injured innocence with which she dismissed them has completely vanished, and the sincerest of their well-wishers could not have been more hearty in his congratulations on the visible improvement in their appearance.

'My dears!' she exclaims warmly as she seizes a hand of each. 'How wonderfully well you look! Everil has grown quite rosy; and as for Valence, I don't believe I should have known him if I had met him in the street. How delighted Dr. Newall will be! But what a paradise you

seem to have come from! Your descriptions of Mentone quite made my mouth water; I would have given anything to join you.'

'You must go there for your next honeymoon, Agatha,' says Valence, laughing.

'You naughty boy! you malicious, wicked creature! when you know I was only rejoicing over it for your sake. Well, it has worked wonders for you; there is no doubt about that. What a blessing you went! How can we ever be sufficiently thankful!'

'How is Arthur?' inquires Everil, rather anxious to stop this stream of hyperbole.

'Very well, dear, and growing charmingly. Miss Strong hardly knew him again. She says he is twice the size he was six months ago. Are you not very much obliged to me, Everil, for giving you such an agreeable surprise as finding dear Miss Strong here?'

'I am very glad to see her,' says Everil.

'Why, what a tone! you fickle girl! when you were doing all you could to get her to come and live with you three months ago.'

'Three months ago is not to-day,' rejoins the Countess, gaily. 'And I am sure I never expressed the slightest wish to see General Hawke again. We never did anything but fight so long as I was under his guardianship, and if he is as contradictory and fault-finding now as he was then, I am afraid General Hawke and I shall quarrel.'

'Fancy your not wishing to see the dear old General!' replies Agatha in a tone of affected disappointment, 'and when I had such trouble to get him over. I thought it would please you so much to be surrounded by all your old friends at Christmas.'

'Oh, it doesn't signify; he is quite welcome to spend his Christmas here; but as you invited him, Agatha, I hope you will take the task of entertaining him upon yourself. As well as Captain Staunton and the rest of your own guests.'

'Captain Staunton a guest of mine!' cries injured Innocence, with a look of horror, 'that is not fair. Valence invited him to come here himself. Did you not, Valence?'

'Yes, I think I must take the onus of that invitation on my own head. But I gave it for your sake, Agatha.'

'For my sake!'

'Of course. You like the man; Everil does not; so I should not have thought of asking him on her account. But I do not suppose he will stay very long.'

'I know nothing about that, Valence. It is entirely your affair, and I must beg you will not bring my name into the business.'

'Halloa! what's up now? Have you had a lovers' quarrel? It will be all right again to-morrow, Agatha. Remember the old lines:

"The falling out of faithful friends
Renewing is of love."

'Valence, I wish you would not speak in this manner. It is most annoying to me,' cries the little widow, almost in tears.

'Don't tease her,' adds his wife; and Lord Valence makes some jesting reply and leaves the room.

'It must seem so strange to you, dear,' says Agatha, in an

apologetic manner, as soon as they find themselves together, 'to hear him talking in such an absurd manner. Even if it were true, I could never let him mention it before you. No woman likes to find herself forgotten.'

'Are you alluding to that old business, Agatha? Oh, pray have no fears on my account. It would not cause me a single pang if Captain Staunton were to marry to-morrow.'

'Ah! you say that because you know how safe you are. No man who had cared for you, Everil, would be likely to forget you easily.'

'Yet you have given Valence to understand that Captain Staunton comes here for your sake.'

Agatha starts and changes colour.

'Did he tell you so? What a sieve that old Valence is! Well, should it ever come to pass, Everil (which is very—very improbable), I know I should have to play second fiddle all my life, and accept the position as gracefully as I could.'

'I don't think there are many men worth marrying under those circumstances, Agatha, and Captain Staunton is not one of them. However, let us change the subject, for, to tell you the truth, I do not care to discuss it. As Valence told you just now, it was not by my wish that Captain Staunton was invited to the Castle, and if he does not come for the sake of seeing you, I suppose it will be for the last time. But I have kept too long away from my guests, and must return to the drawing-room. Will you come with me? Thanks. There are rather too many for me to engage alone.'

It is a cold, dark December afternoon, just a couple of days before Christmas, and in the draw

ing-room they find the whole party crowded round the fire and talking gaily to one another of every topic under the sun—Lord Valence's voice being the loudest and the gayest of all. As they perceive their hostess, they fall apart to enable her to enter the circle, where she finds herself close to her husband.

'Rather different from Mentone, dear,' she says, with a smile that makes old Miss Strong's eyes quiver with emotion.

'Yes, indeed. Come nearer to the fire, Everil. Give me your hands. Why, they are as cold as ice! What have you been doing?'

'Only talking to Agatha.'

'On disagreeable topics, I am afraid,' interposes Maurice Staunton insinuatingly.

'They were not agreeable ones to me.'

'Well, my Lady,' says General Hawke, in his gruff style, 'and how many horses' knees have you broken since you came to Castle Valence?'

'I've broken nothing, General—not even a heart!'

Valence, lover-like, is longing to put in something here, but etiquette restrains him.

'Not your husband's?' continues the General coarsely.

'Not yet,' she returns, trying to pass his words off as a jest.

'That's a miracle,' says General Hawke, and subsides into a newspaper.

'I am longing to see all over this beautiful place, my dear,' whispers Miss Strong, who only arrived the day before. 'It looks a perfect paradise from my windows.'

'And so it is a paradise—of happiness,' replies Everil in the same tone. 'I will show you round the premises the first fine day we have, Miss Strong. I have two or three very favourite haunts

here, one especially, where dear Valence has been accustomed to study, in fine weather, ever since he was a little boy.'

'Oh, my dear, I am so pleased—so thankful to find you thus,' says the old governess, with a significant squeeze of the hand, which she finds as significantly returned.

'How pleasant it is to see you all here,' exclaims the host warmly. 'We shall no longer be able to complain of the dullness of the Castle in winter, Everil.'

'It could never be dull to me, Valence,' she replies.

'Come, darling, that is going rather too far, even for such a pair of turtle doves as you are,' interposes Mrs. West. 'I remember you told me that when you first saw Castle Valence, even though it was in June, you shivered from the effects of its mere appearance. Have you forgotten what a dislike you took to the poor library? Why, I heard you declare one day that you would never enter it again.'

'I know better now,' says Everil; but she looks uncomfortable, even at the mention of that ill-fated room.

'And what is the history of the library?' demands Maurice Staunton, in his most persuasive voice. 'Is it haunted? You ought to possess a haunted room in so old and important-looking a residence as this!'

Bulwer glances at the Countess; her eyes are fixed upon her husband.

'Haunted!' says Valence, with a slight laugh; but his eyes move uneasily from side to side as he speaks. 'What with? The apparition of a headless man, or the sound of rustling silks? Those are the two stock horrors of haunted houses, Staunton; but I have never seen either of them myself.'

'Indeed! Perhaps you are not clairvoyant, as the occult call it. Has Lady Valence been more fortunate?' he continues, turning to Everil, who has risen, and now stands by the Earl.

'The worst apparitions I have met with here,' she answers bravely, 'are kind thoughts, and words, and actions. The Castle is haunted by them, thanks to my husband.'

Valence casts a look of gratitude upon her, and Staunton perceives it is his cue to follow in its train.

'Well put, Lady Valence; and not less well than true. Of that, no one who has enjoyed the hospitality of your roof needs an assurance. Though I cannot allow that the Castle is complete without a ghost, there is no necessity you should be troubled to bear witness to its reality. Perhaps I may be the lucky man to evoke the hereditary shadow.'

'Oh! don't talk of the "hereditary shadow,"' cries Agatha, 'or you will send Everil into hysterics. You evidently are not acquainted with the legend of the Valence family; that in every fourth generation——'

'Agatha! I will thank you not to repeat that lying prophecy,' exclaims the Earl, with apparently unneeded energy; 'you know how averse I am to tittle-tattle.'

'Call a prophecy of upwards of two hundred years old tittle-tattle!' rejoins Mrs. West. 'I think you are most disrespectful to the warnings of your ancestors, Valence! Besides, remember how singularly it has been fulfilled. You have surely not forgotten the story of your great-grandmother and the puissant Duke of——'

'I tell you again I will not have such folly made the subject of discussion,' says the Earl angrily. 'The rumour was as false as its forerunner. But had the prophecy

proved true from generation to generation, it must have failed now, when Castle Valence is in the possession of myself and Everil.'

'Very good, dear. I am sorry I alluded to it; but it was poor Arthur's fault it ever reached my ears. He was never tired of talking of his family history.'

The Earl mutters something not very respectful to the memory of his dead brother, and the conversation is immediately diverted into a more agreeable channel.

'What made you allude to that insane legend?' demands Valence of his sister-in-law, a few days later, as they chance to discuss the proceedings of the day in question. 'You must have been aware it would not prove an agreeable topic.'

'My dear Valence! how could I suppose you would be affected by it? But it has come curiously true, has it not? Still I should have imagined that *you*——'

'That I, who have so short a time to live, must be entirely indifferent to what people may say of my wife? Not so, Agatha! The guardianship of my treasure may be soon wrested from my hands; but so long as they hold it no breath of scandal shall sully her fair name. I am a weak—a dying man!—I know it well; but whilst I am a man that legend shall be proved a lie.'

'You talk with much certainty, my dear brother-in-law; but I thought that ladies were generally considered to be the guardians of their own honour. At all events, they should be capable of being so. Captain Staunton is not looking so well as he was in the autumn, is he?'

'What makes you bring Staunton's name in at this juncture? I thought we were discussing the folly of that old prophecy!'

'And I thought you wished the subject ended.'

'So I do. It is waste of time to speak of it.'

'Then there can be no impropriety in my passing on to another topic. So I repeat that Maurice is not looking well. Everil was mentioning the fact to me only now.'

'You have come to call him by his Christian name, eh, Agatha? Your intimacy is advancing fast!'

'I think I only repeated what dear Everil said to me; but perhaps I had better not have mentioned it.'

'Have mentioned what?'

'Oh, never mind. I hate bandying words in this manner. But she knew him, remember, before she ever set eyes on you.'

'And if she did, you cannot compare a chance acquaintance with her husband.'

'My dear Valence! as if anybody thought there could be any comparison between you! As well liken a lion to a mouse! But you men are all tyrants, a set of jealous Bluebeards. I suppose if you found out that Everil had ever had a love affair before she met you, you would be up in arms at once!'

'On the contrary, she informed me frankly she had engaged in some such little *affaire de cœur*, but I had no wish to inquire further.'

'Oh, you know all about it, then! What a load you have taken off my mind! I have been so afraid of putting my foot in it.'

'How could you put your foot in it?' he replies, his suspicions immediately aroused by the uncertainty of her manner.

'Dear Valence, don't ask me anything further. If Everil has told you all, there is no need for me to supplement her narrative. I am so glad you take it in this liberal

spirit. Most men would have made such a fuss. And, after all, "least said soonest mended" is one of the best maxims we possess.'

'From the way you speak, I infer you know the name of the man to whom my wife alluded.'

The little widow stops short and regards the Earl with a look of astonishment.

'You don't mean to say she didn't tell you his name! Oh, the sly puss! Though, after all, it can't make the slightest difference.'

'Of course not; yet I should like to hear it.'

'How curious the male sex is!'

'If you know it, I see no reason why you should not confide it to me.'

'My dear Valence, you might as well ask me to cut your head off. Divulge your wife's secrets! For shame! Inquisitiveness is a quality supposed to be peculiar to us poor silly women.'

'Everil has no secrets from me; I am sure she would not mind your telling me.'

'No—no! you must ask her yourself, though I hardly think you will obtain an answer—at least now.'

'Is it any one in the house, then?' cries Valence quickly.

'My dear Valence! how you do shake my nerves! Do you imagine dear Everil has had a little affair with General Hawke, or that poor dear stupid old Mildmay?'

'There are other men in the house beside Mildmay and Hawke,' returns her companion, with a frown.

'You are growing suspicious in your old age, you naughty boy. There is nothing makes a woman so unhappy as to have a jealous husband.'

'Jealous! Folly! Who said

I was jealous? I am not a man to suspect wrongfully, and Everil would never give me a cause.'

'If you believe that, you are all right. And as for this nameless gentleman who seems likely to disturb your peace of mind, take my advice, and think no more about him.'

'I shall not. He is not worth thinking of.'

'That is what Isola would tell you. By the way, did you get good manifestations at Mentone?'

'I did not try to get any.'

'You have not spoken to Isola since you have been away from home?'

'Not once.'

'Oh! Valence. How fickle; how unkind of you! Poor Isola! She is indeed soon forgotten.'

'I have not forgotten her—or anything. But I have been so happy, Agatha—the time of our absence passed so blissfully and peacefully away, I had not the courage to break in upon its calm.'

'I thought Isola's messages were always of so comforting a nature.'

'They used to be, in my solitude. But now of what can they remind me but separation and decay?'

'Will the loss of the spiritual affection you used to lean upon serve to make the contemplation of the change more bearable?'

'No. I see I have been wrong. I have been unkind—ungrateful. Yet I think the complete rest did me good, Agatha. Happiness is so new a feeling to me.'

'My poor Valence! May it never prove a fallacious one. Well, go on, and be as happy as you may. And don't let this little snake in the grass have any power to mar your happiness. You start. Have you forgotten?—I mean the Great Unknown!'

He comes to the recollection with a sigh.

'Why should I? I thought we had already disposed of that subject. But I will not neglect Isola, Agatha. I will sit with you to-night as usual. Only—I think it will be as well not to mention our intention to dear Everil. She has grown so fidgety about my health lately, and so alarmed lest I should do anything to injure it. Yes, I should like to see Isola again. She may have some consolation for me—who knows! Mentone has done wonders for my body, and she may work a miracle for my sick soul.'

'Oh! dear Valence! I don't like to damp your spirits (it is so delightful to see you cheerful and happy again); only, remember Isola is not a mortal, and able to chop and change her opinions like the wind.'

'You are right, Agatha. I am altogether too disposed to be hopeful. Well, let us make the appointment for twelve o'clock to-night; and, meanwhile, not a word to Everil.'

As soon as his sister-in-law has left him the Earl relapses into his first mood, and begins to wonder who his wife's first love can possibly have been.

'It is strange she did not mention his name to me,' he soliloquises. 'She said, if I remember rightly, that the name could not signify—that she had done with him and with his name for ever.' At this remembrance his countenance grows brighter. 'Of course she did, dear girl! She said she had done with him for ever; and Everil is not the woman to tell a lie. She trusted me; I will trust her in the same way—I should be less than man if I did otherwise. From this hour to that of my death, she shall never hear the subject mentioned by me.'

Having arrived at this conclusion, he goes in search of her, but rambles through the vast rooms in vain. The Countess is not in the Castle. That fact is self-evident, but no one appears able to inform him where she is.

Lord Valence passes out into the grounds, and makes the terrace walks and gardens re-echo with the name of Everil, yet she does not answer to the call. Puzzled, and somewhat disappointed, he orders his horse round from the stables and sets off for a ride, thinking he may encounter his wife in some of the lanes surrounding Castle Valence. As he traverses the drawbridge and enters the leafless park, he comes upon her suddenly. She is not alone. By her side, walking close and talking earnestly, is Captain Staunton. Something in the sight seems to paralyse Lord Valence. He reins in his steed and addresses her.

'What are you doing here, Everil? The morning is rather cold for outdoor exercise.'

She greets him with a bright, loyal smile, and takes up her position by his saddle-girths, Maurice Staunton standing a little on one side, and digging vigorously in the earth with his slender cane.

'Cold, dearest! I am as warm as possible. I was just saying I think we shall have a thaw. Where are you off to?'

'Only for a ride to kill time. I was in hopes you would have accompanied me.'

'Oh! what a pity! I should have enjoyed it so much. But to dress now would bring it too near luncheon. Besides, Captain Staunton asked me out here for a special purpose. He wanted to speak to me.'

'Very good. I hope you will enjoy yourselves,' replies the Earl coldly as he prepares to move on.

She does not perceive his humour. She does not attempt to detain him.

'Good-bye, dear. And do not be late for luncheon, as you were yesterday,' she calls out gaily as he turns his back upon her.

CHAPTER XXIX.

'WHO GAVE YOU THOSE FLOWERS?'

WHAT Everil said was true. Maurice Staunton *had* asked for a private interview with her. As breakfast was ended that morning he had approached her side, so as to be out of hearing of the others, and said in a low voice: 'If Lady Valence will not consider the request impertinent or obtrusive, may I ask for a few minutes' private conversation?'

Her first impulse was to refuse him. His very presence had become obnoxious to her; she hated the thought of the intimacy which had formerly existed between them, and, above all things, dreaded that he should make an allusion to it. For a moment she was silent, and he seemed to guess what was passing through her mind.

'My business does not concern myself alone,' he said. 'It involves the welfare of another person.' And the Countess's thoughts immediately flew to Agatha.

'If that is the case, and it is anything of importance, Captain Staunton, I shall be happy to talk to you on the subject; but I have not much time to spare, with so many guests to attend to.'

'Half an hour will be sufficient.'

'I am just going to take my dogs a run through the park. Perhaps you would like to accompany me?'

'I shall be but too grateful for the privilege.'

'Very well; then you will find

me on the terrace in ten minutes' time.'

She would have avoided him altogether if she could; but she thought that, when asked, she could hardly do less than this for a guest invited by her husband; and, averse as she was to mentioning a circumstance of which she had become heartily ashamed, she resolved, whilst dressing herself for her morning ramble, that if an opportunity occurred, she would speak out boldly to Maurice Staunton, tell him how distasteful his presence was to her, and ask him, as a gentleman, to rid her of it henceforward.

'I think I can guess what it is you wish to speak to me about,' she continued, as they took their way towards the park. 'It concerns my sister-in-law, Mrs. West, does it not?'

Maurice Staunton put on an expression of well-acted surprise.

'How very strange! I did not think anybody had seen it but myself.'

'That is a common error under similar circumstances, Captain Staunton. But Agatha is not of a very reticent disposition, remember.'

'You distress me to a marvellous degree, Lady Valence. What can you possibly think of it all?'

Here she coloured vividly, but did not hesitate. 'I anticipated you would say something of the kind. I imagined it was for that purpose you asked to speak to me alone; and I tell you truly, Captain Staunton, that had it not been so, I should not have granted you this interview. But, as things have taken so unexpected a turn, it is best we should speak plainly to each other, and come to a perfect understanding.'

'You are, as you always were, all goodness; only you will promise not to misapprehend my meaning?'

'I will believe your statement, as you make it; it would be impossible to do more; only be brief if you please, and keep to the matter in hand.'

'Let us premise, then, that I had no idea of what was coming, or I should not have accepted the Earl's generous invitation to the Castle.'

'I do not follow you. It appears to me the only reason for which you need have come.'

'But it was, so unexpected, so entirely spontaneous. You must remember that last May——'

'Please to keep to the matter in hand, Captain Staunton.'

'How shall I put it, then? You know I never felt anything for Mrs. West except friendship, and had I done otherwise I should have wooed her anywhere but *here*.'

'We seem to be playing at cross-purposes. How could you woo her except in her own home?'

'Under your eyes?'

'Oh, Captain Staunton! let us understand each other here. If I had any objection to seeing that you had engaged the affections of my sister-in-law, it would be from a very different motive from that with which you credit me. I am more than indifferent to the past; I dislike the remembrance of it. Were Agatha my own sister I might be alarmed for her well-doing; but as she is only my husband's sister-in-law, and perfectly capable of looking after herself, all I can say is, that if she mars her happiness by marrying you, it will not be for want of warning and experience.'

'But—excuse me, Lady Valence—you speak as if the feeling existed on both sides. Can Mrs. West have voluntarily deceived you?'

'Do you mean to insinuate that it is her affections alone that are engaged—that you have no serious

intentions respecting her—that you are going to repeat the villainy——’

But here she stopped. It was too great a compliment to him to speak so vehemently of his defection towards herself.

‘Your Ladyship is hard on me,’ he replied mournfully.

‘Tell me the truth, then,’ said Everil. ‘Are you, or are you not, in earnest respecting Mrs. West? She imagines that you are. She has hinted as much both to the Earl and myself. I thought you had brought me out here expressly to say you wished to marry her.’

‘I wish to marry Mrs. West! I am placed in a very painful position, Lady Valence; but I will conceal nothing from you. I asked to speak to you with a very different intention—in order to tell you that your sister-in-law, having been good enough to conceive a certain interest in me, which I unfortunately find myself unable to return, has threatened to disclose the fact of our former relations to the Earl, and inform him that I have assumed the appearance of affection for herself for the sole purpose of obtaining a footing in Castle Valence.’

‘She could never stoop so low!’ cried the Countess indignantly.

‘She says she will do so; and I appeal to you, Lady Valence, to tell me what I shall do. I place myself in your hands; you may command my actions.’

‘If this is true, you should leave the Castle, and never return to it. If Agatha carries out her threat, she will only tell the Earl of what he knew before; but perhaps your departure may prevent the renewal of so unpleasant a topic.’

‘Do you mean to say that Lord Valence knows—all?’

‘I mean to say that I have told him as much as he would care to

know. I have no secrets from my husband. For Agatha’s sake—supposing what she said was true, that she was the attraction that brought you here—I did not mention your name; but with your departure I should have no objection to do so.’

‘But will not flight look very much like guilt?’

‘I do not know. I should not care. If you do not come here for Agatha, there is no reason why you should stay. You must have seen that your presence is distasteful to me.’

‘I have seen, and mourned over it bitterly.’

‘Captain Staunton, this interview and its results give me an opportunity which I have wished for. I am sorry, as your hostess, to be obliged to say anything that appears rude or inhospitable, but as I was unable to imagine what should have induced you to accept the first invitation you received to come here, so am I now unable to understand, hearing what you have told me this morning, why you permitted it to be renewed. If you do not come for the purpose of seeing my sister-in-law, you inflict unnecessary annoyance on me, for my only wish with respect to yourself is to forget that we ever met each other.’

‘If you are entirely indifferent to the memory, why should it continue to pain you?’ he muttered.

‘It does not pain, but it irritates me! I see now what a fool I was to have preferred you even for a moment to such a man as Valence. This sounds terribly rude, I know, but I must tell you the truth. I love my husband dearly!’

‘You know how to torture a man, Lady Valence.’

‘If the intelligence tortures you,

it can be only through wounding your self-love. But knowing this, you must feel how little I can care for seeing you. If I had my own wish, I would never look on you in this life again. And had it not been for Agatha, I should have told you so before, and prevented a repetition of your visit.'

'You are queen here, Lady Valence, and I have nothing to do but bow to your wishes. But how differently we feel upon this subject! I have become an object of aversion to you——'

'Not quite an object of aversion!' she cried, relenting her harsh words.

'The next thing to it, then; whilst I, however sad I may feel the retrospect to be, can never look upon the past except as sacred. But you are mated and happy—whilst I am—alone. Perhaps that may cause the difference.'

'Of course it does! You will be married too, some day, and thank God you waited till the right person came!'

It was at this juncture they perceived the Earl riding towards them. Everil's face lit up like the sun.

'There is my husband! I wonder where he is going!' and then ensued the brief conversation narrated in the last chapter.

* * * * *

'You have not yet told me what I am to do with regard to Mrs. West?' says Maurice Staunton, as Lord Valence again leaves them.

'It is really a most difficult matter on which to advise you. Agatha is not a young girl on her promotion. I think you had better speak as openly to her as you have done to me, and then leave the Castle.'

'I am to be banished, then, in the midst of my holidays. It is rather hard!'

'I do not banish; I simply advise you.'

'You would not speak to Mrs. West for me?'

'Decidedly not! I must refuse to have anything to do with her affairs or yours, Captain Staunton.'

'If I speak to her and she is reasonable enough not to demand my immediate absence, may I stay here for the remainder of my visit, Lady Valence?'

'That decision must rest with yourself, or her. I did not invite you to the Castle, remember! You are, I believe, my husband's guest, and accountable to him only, for the length of your visit. It is entirely indifferent to me what you do.'

At this he sighs and makes no answer.

'All the same,' continues the Countess lightly, after a pause, 'I don't think it would be a bad arrangement if you were to marry Agatha. She is still young and pretty, and she has a tolerable income of her own. What are your objections to the match?'

'I shall never marry!'

'Indeed! I think I have heard people make the same observation before. You will not marry till you get some one richer than Agatha, perhaps; but I would not give much for your determination when that occurs.'

'Your own position is so strong, you can afford to be cruel.'

'No! Don't say that! Say I am so happy myself, I can afford to laugh a little at other people. But here we are on the terraces again, and I must go and look after my lady guests. Good-bye for the present.'

'Say that we are friends, Lady Valence!' he pleads humbly, as they are about to separate.

'I can never say that any one whom my husband takes by the hand is *not* my friend,' she answers gravely; and he is com-

pelled to be content with the equivocal reply.

* * * *

The following day the Countess is standing by her boudoir table rapt in thought. Valence has not appeared so cheerful the last few hours, and the fact worries her. Either he is not well or out of temper, and in either case she fears that the study she so much dreads for him is at the bottom of the change. Ever since they returned to the Castle she has been longing to ask him to have nothing more to do with spiritualism, but his gaiety has prevented her alluding to a subject which is always sure to bring a cloud upon his brow. But should his present humour continue, she resolves at all costs to speak out plainly, and tell him he is killing her with himself. Would that rouse him? she thinks eagerly. Would the idea that he was injuring her have any power to dispel his infatuation?

As she ruminates, a modest tap sounds upon her door, and on her giving the usual permission for entrance, who should appear but Maurice Staunton carrying a bouquet of hot-house flowers.

'Oh! is it you, Captain Staunton! I thought you had gone to Ballybroogan.'

'Gone and returned with this trophy in my hand. May I lay it at your feet, Lady Valence?'

'What splendid camellias! I wonder how it is that the O'Connors get everything floral better than we do. I fancy our houses must have been very much neglected before I came. These are certainly prize blossoms.'

'Then they are all the fitter to present to you. Is my little offering accepted?'

She does not quite know what to say. She has no wish to take anything from Captain Staunton, but

she feels that to make a fuss about doing so would invest the act with an importance of which it is not worthy. So she answers carelessly:

'Oh! certainly—if you have no one else to give them to. I suppose Mrs. O'Connor intended they should come to me. Please put them on the table, Captain Staunton. I am just going to embroider, and the stalks will soil my fingers.'

'They are protected by paper.'

'So they are. But the flowers will not last unless they are placed in water, so I will ring for my maid to perform the operation.'

'May I stay and see it done?'

'Certainly not! This room is strictly private, and no one ever enters it but my husband—except on invitation. I shall be down to luncheon. Good morning.'

She allows him no alternative but to withdraw; which, looking rather crestfallen, he does, leaving the door open behind him.

A footstep sounds along the passage: Everil takes up the flowers, and turns towards the doorway with them in her hand.

'Parsons,' she commences, thinking the newcomer is her maid.

But it is Lord Valence who stands before her.

She is about to greet him warmly, when, glancing from her face to the flowers in her hand, he demands in a rough tone, utterly unlike his usual gentle manner:

'Who gave you those flowers?'

'Captain Staunton, dear: he has just brought them over from Ballybroogan.'

The Earl raises his hand and dashes the bouquet to the ground.

'I won't have you accept flowers from any d—d jackanapes who chooses to bring them to you,' he exclaims loudly.

'Valence! Valence! what is the matter? What makes you behave in such an extraordinary way?'

But the next moment he has flung his arms wildly round her and clasped her to his breast.

'Oh! my darling! my own, own darling! never make me jealous, or I shall go mad!'

'Make you jealous, dear Valence!—how could I, when I love you so much? I would lay down my life for you, Valence!'

'I know you would! I feel you would! This is an insanity that has come over me. But I am so unfit to love you, Everil! I am so unused to pay women these small attentions; and then, when others steal a march on me, I am angry with myself and you, poor innocent child! and fancy you must prefer their company to mine. But you don't—do you, Everil?'

'My love! how can you talk like this, when I have said that you are dearer to me than all the world beside? What do I care for flowers, or anything else that does not come from your hands? I did not even wish to take them, but Captain Staunton would insist upon leaving them on the table.'

'Forgive me, darling! It is all my wretched temper. But you are so precious to me, Everil! I could not bear to lose even the least little morsel of your interest. It is very strange,' he goes on musingly, 'I do not seem ever to have known what jealousy was before you told me that you loved me. When I thought you were indifferent to me, I was miserable and discontented; but now that I know I possess all your heart, I am in constant terror lest you should discover how unworthy I am of such a treasure, and take it back again.'

'You wrong me, Valence,' she says reproachfully.

'I know I do—and I will crush out the wretched feeling as though it were a temptation from the devil. But, oh! Everil!' he con-

tinues earnestly, 'never make me jealous, even in the remotest degree, or you will raise a demon in me difficult to quell. If I felt your heart were going from me, I should forget everything in the world beside—sickness, sorrow, misfortune, even death itself, would appear less than nothing by comparison. My life is in your hands—as is all my hope, and trust, and joy. Tell me, dearest, that I am safe—that you will never care for any man as you now care for me.'

'You know I shall not, Valence!—that I am yours, and yours only, until death parts us!'

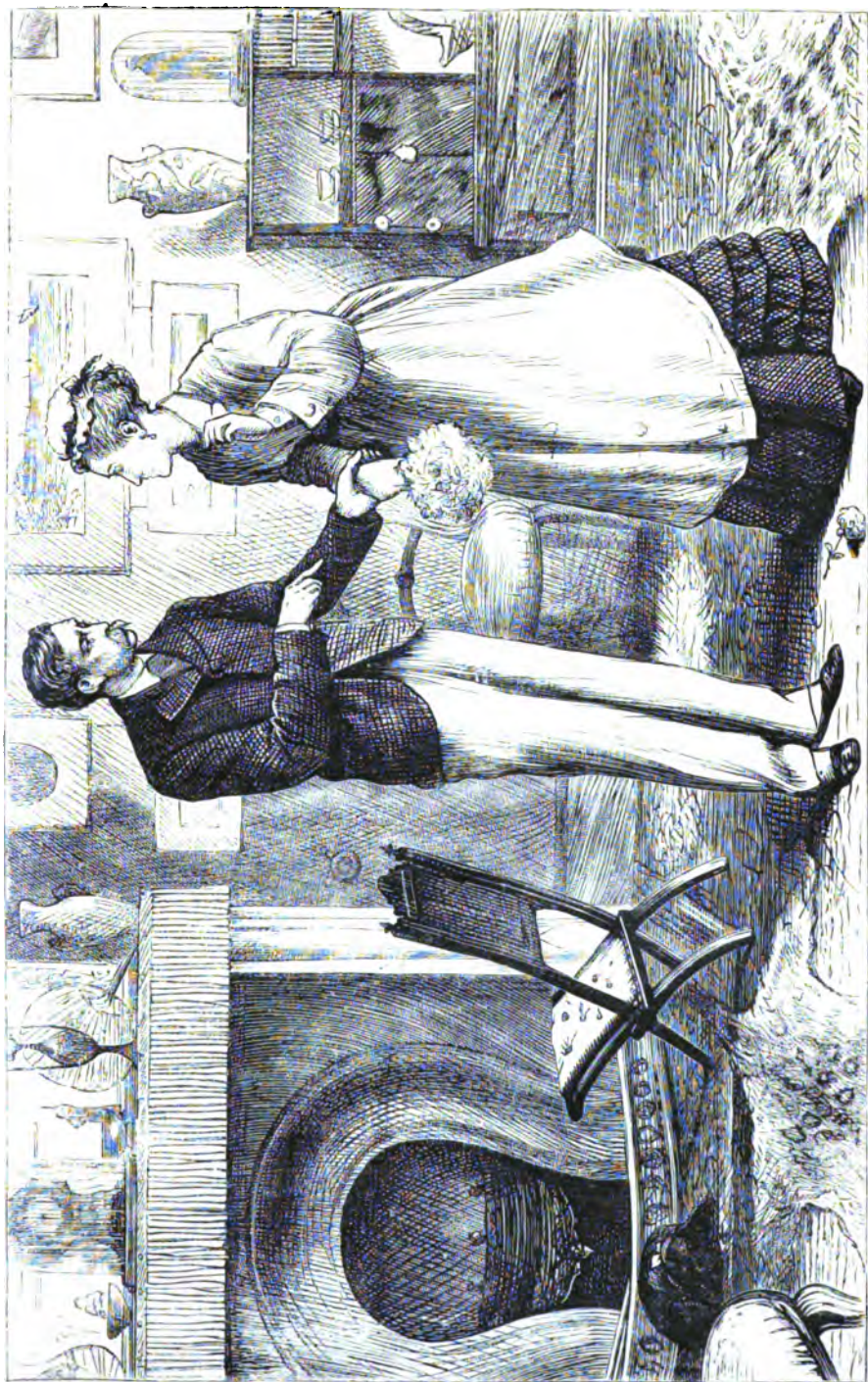
'Ah!—and that will be for such a little while!—such a little, little while! I shall go before you have learnt how much I love you in return. To-morrow, Everil, will be the first of January—the last new year that I shall ever see on earth.'

'I cannot believe it!' she whispers, as with closed eyes she leans against his breast. 'You will be saved, even though God has to send an angel from heaven to rescue you!'

'You are my angel!' he answers fondly; 'and it is God who sent you to cheer the last months of my life, and make even the prospect of death, in your arms, seem like an easy sleep!'

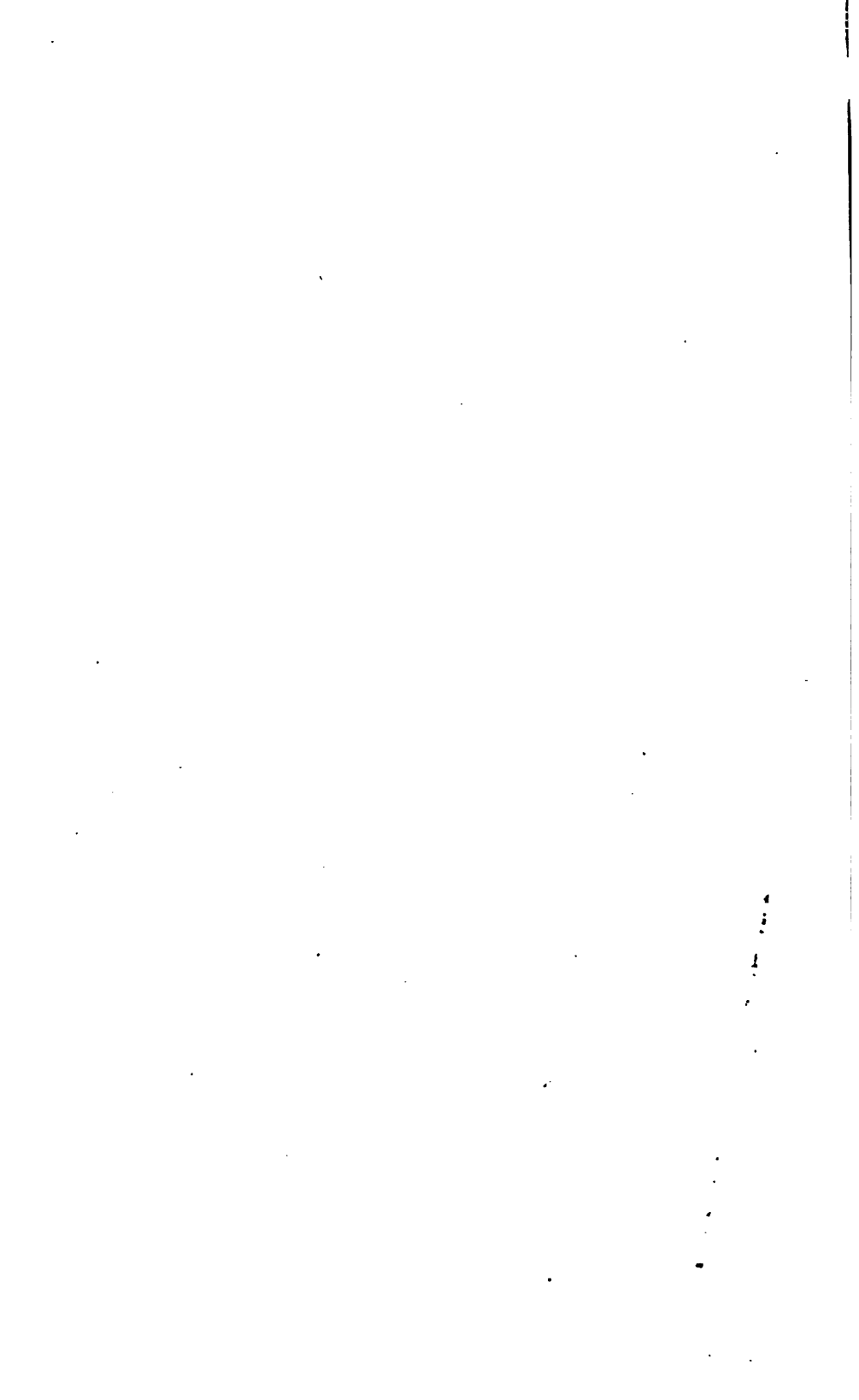
'I will be your angel!' exclaims Everil, suddenly but determinately.

She does not know by what means her resolution will be performed. The future is all dark before her, and no help appears on any side; yet in that moment of inspiration she believes that what she says will come to pass, and that she has been raised up for the salvation of her husband. A mighty faith takes possession of her soul; her eyes kindle; she lifts her drooping head from Valence's breast, and stands upright,



Drawn by F. A. Fraser.]

OPEN! SESAME!
'Who gave you those flowers?'



feeling as though she had the strength of a lion to accomplish his deliverance.

'I *will* save him!' she thinks again to herself when he has left her. 'I cannot see the way, or the means: it is all confusion and mystery; but something or somebody spoke to me at that moment, and told me that if I have the will, the way is not inscrutable. I told Alice long ago, when we were talking about love, and she was arguing the subject in her feeble manner, that there was no love worthy of the name in these effete modern days. No love that would sacrifice itself for its object; that would trample down all obstacles that lay between them; endure the breath of shame and obloquy—and even render back the love that makes its own happiness, in order to secure that of the beloved.'

'Could I do as much as that for Valence, I wonder? If I could save him by it—restore him to his reason and his friends—could I bear that he should think me heartless, ungrateful, unworthy of his true affection, and bear his scorn and his contempt, where I now receive his love?

'Could I bear to see him pining for the caresses I longed but did not dare to bestow on him; and find, when he was cured of his sick fancies and mad infatuation, that he was also cured of any liking for myself?

'It would be terrible! It would be worse, a thousand times, than merely giving up my poor life in exchange for his. It would be a moral suicide—a living death—the tomb closed over all my hopes whilst they still struggled and fought for existence!—yet I think that I could bear it—for him!

'To see him restored to health, and life, and action; to know that the old name should not die

out; that his intellect was once more free from clouds, and that my Valence should live to a good old age, and leave an honoured memory behind him:—to obtain this, I would sacrifice all that I possess, even to his precious love!

'Oh! my husband! I think there must be some true love left, even in these "effete modern days."'

CHAPTER XXX.

'I WILL DIE IN THE ATTEMPT.'

A FEW days afterwards John Bulwer is seated before the fire in Dr. Newall's cottage, smoking, and engaged in conversation with the old man on the subject of Lord Valence's health. It is evening, and Bulwer has strolled down from the Castle, after dinner, without confiding his intentions to any one. He is becoming seriously alarmed about his friend Valence, and Dr. Newall's remarks do not tend to decrease his fears.

'There is no doubt about it,' says the old doctor decisively; 'the man will die!'

'But can nothing be done to save him?'

'I have done all I can. I have physicked him mentally and bodily. I have kept his blood cool with medicine, and I have placed the risk he is running as plainly before his eyes as common English words will do it. He heeds neither my warning nor my advice. He has taken every possible means to kill himself.'

'Is he insane?' asks Bulwer in a low voice.

'Temporarily, he is insane.'

'Could he be treated for it?'

'No, Mr. Bulwer! A man may do the maddest things possible. He may risk his own life, or those of other people, squander his money, drink himself into a state border-

ing on idiocy, or deny himself the common necessities of existence; yet if he is capable of managing his domestic affairs, there is no law in England by which they can be managed for him. Lord Valence is in far greater need of control than half the poor wretches we confine in asylums. He can neither manage himself, his health, nor his estate. He has permitted a miserable superstition to obtain so firm a hold on his mind, that he is walking into the grave with his eyes wide open; yet there is no power but his own free will that can restrain him. I had hoped so much from the influence of the Countess, who is one of the best women I ever came across; but from what you tell me she appears, like the rest of us, to have failed.'

'I have told you nothing but the truth. I can hardly describe to you what a difference even this last week has made in him. I knew, of course, that there was some mystery connected with his studies; but I had no idea of the extent of the evil till Lady Valence spoke to me last night. It seems too awful to think that a man should throw his life away in this manner! Surely Mrs. West, who has been with him all these years, might have done something to prevent it.'

'My dear young man!' exclaims Dr. Newall emphatically, 'don't repeat I said so, but Mrs. West is a snake in the grass, a double-distilled hypocrite, an incarnation of the Fiend himself. I detest that little woman! Mark my words! For all her peachy, dimpled cheeks, and her sweet smile, and her insinuating manner, it will be found out some day that she has had more to do with her brother-in-law's infatuation than the world thinks for! I have tried to catch her in vain. She is as soft-footed

as a cat, and as slippery as an eel; but I know that she rejoices at poor Valence's ill-health, and that the worst news you could take her would be the news of his recovery.'

'But why should she harbour enmity against him, when he has so generously given her a home?'

'A home which she would like to retain altogether, Mr. Bulwer. Are you so blind as not to see she has a son, and that if the Earl dies little Arthur will become Lord Valence? Oh! it is all as plain as a pikestaff to me. I read Agatha West's mind years ago. She only married poor Arthur because he stood a very good chance of getting the title; and when he so unexpectedly died, she turned all her attention to the interests of her child.'

'I knew Mrs. West was a deceitful woman, but I little thought she could be as bad as that.'

'If a woman is deceitful, Mr. Bulwer, she will go to any lengths her fancy may direct her. A bad woman—and by a bad woman I mean a godless woman—is generally very bad indeed. The sex has too little foresight, too feeble reasoning power, too little fear of consequences, to be upright and honourable on principle alone. Touch their hearts—make them once believe in and feel the love of the man-god for their individual selves, and they will be capable of any sacrifice for his sake; but without this power of emotion they are unsexed—no longer women as God intended women to be, yet without the mental strength of man. A man can be moral from no other sense than that it is for the good of society he should be so; a woman snaps her fingers at society, and if she be not moral because the Almighty is offended by sin, will, in all probability, embrace the first

opportunity of falling. A man may be irreligious and yet honourable in his transactions; if a woman is not religious, Mr. Bulwer, she is nothing at all: a building without foundation, an empty shrine, a bubble that bursts whilst you are looking at it! And yet some men complain that their wives are too fond of going to church, and singing psalms, and being generally God-fearing. Short sighted fools! If, by forbidding their religious observances, or driving them through sheer weariness of argument to adopt a lighter course of action, they pull out the foundation stone so that the whole building totters and becomes frail, let them not complain if it fall on themselves, and crush them down to a deeper hell than their imaginations have ever pictured.'

'You speak feelingly, Dr. Newall.'

'I speak from experience, sir! I know that a woman must either belong to God or the devil, and that if she once gives herself up to the power of evil, there is no saying to what depths her feeble, unprotected nature may not fall.'

'What you have said of Mrs. West shocks me greatly.'

'You would be more shocked if you could read her heart. If you have any regard for your friend, Mr. Bulwer, watch that woman—watch her day and night, and try to find out how far she influences him when away from his wife.'

'I will. You have aroused my suspicions, and they shall not sleep again. Mrs. West has a spy dogging her footsteps from this time forward. Who can that be knocking at your door so late?'

'I cannot imagine. Lord Valence always turns the handle for

himself. Bridget!' says Dr. Newall, calling into the passage, 'there is some one knocking at the door. Bless that woman! she is always out of the way when I require her. I will answer it myself.'

He undoes the fastenings, and finds upon the threshold a woman, breathless with running, enveloped in a dark cloak, with a shawl about her head.

'Lady Valence!—at this time of night!'

'Oh, Doctor, don't look so astonished! It is not so very late, is it? And I have run all the way here from the Castle, and I must go back directly, or he will miss me. Let me come in, Doctor. I must speak to you—I have so much to say!'

'Come in at once, my Lady. It is unfit you should remain out in the cold—only I must tell you that Mr. Bulwer is sitting with me; so that if your communication is a private one—'

'I will go at once, if Lady Valence desires it,' says Bulwer, rising to his feet.

'No, not at all,' she answers, waving her hand. 'I have no secrets that Mr. Bulwer may not hear. Only I have come, Doctor, to tell you that I will save my husband's life, or I will die in the attempt.'

She has thrown off the shawl from her head, and stands before them like some beautiful inspired prophetess. Her hair is disordered from her unusual head-dress, her cheeks are crimson, her eyes are lighted with a feverish fire. Bulwer thinks as he looks at her that she ought to have a drawn sword in her hand.

'I will save my husband's life,' she repeats firmly, 'or I will die in the attempt!'

(To be continued.)

‘HOW THE WORLD WAGS.

THE NEW HAMLET, AND HIS CRITICS, CRITICISED—THE FROST: FROM TWO POINTS OF VIEW—MR. MARTINGALE'S REFLECTIONS—A JOURNAL CALLED ‘THE WORLD’—THE WINTER EXHIBITION AT THE ROYAL ACADEMY.

WHENEVER general opinion takes one direction, it is tolerably certain that some one will arise and express diametrically opposite views; and the reason of this is obvious: by so doing the new critic seems to show that his insight into the matter under discussion is much clearer and keener than that of the world at large. With something nearly approaching to unanimity, it has been decided that Mr. Henry Irving's Hamlet is a performance of most extraordinary merit — something altogether different from, and higher than, the impersonations of character which the modern stage has been accustomed to see; and, consequently, as was to be anticipated, an essay is written with a desire to prove that Mr. Irving, together with the world in general, is altogether wrong, and that nobody really understands the subject except the writer. I must confess myself to be a hearty admirer of Mr. Irving, and eager, for the sake of the stage (which lately seemed to be dropping into a parlous state), that this representation should meet with its just deserts; and as the new critic has been permitted to give his opinion in ‘Macmillan's Magazine,’ a periodical of the very highest class, as need hardly be said, it is worth while to consider how far he is justified in setting himself up as *censor censorum* in opposition to the voice of the critics whom he condemns, and of the general public which has warmly confirmed their verdict.

There seem to me several points on which ‘A Templar’ is mani-

festly wrong; and, as he objects to the quotation of ‘hackneyed scraps of Coleridge and Goethe,’ I shall endeavour to strengthen my own opinion by scraps of Shakespeare's text.

Taking a few of the objections *seriatim*, the first is that Mr. Irving omits the lines,

‘Why, let the stricken deer go weep,
The hart ungalled play;
For some must watch, while some must sleep:
So runs the world away.’

‘This omission is only one of a series of alterations made in furtherance of the melodramatic side of the character,’ ‘A Templar’ believes. I do not exactly understand what the melodramatic side of Hamlet's character may chance to be; but if the writer means that Mr. Irving lacks the requisite variety of expression to venture on those fantastic and apparently inconsequent speeches which are put into Hamlet's mouth, I would point out that he always gives the lines,

‘For thou dost know, oh Damon dear,
This realm dismantled was
Of Jove himself, and now reigns here
A very, very—peacock,’

lines which are fantastic in the extreme, and, I should suppose, unsuitable to the melodramatic side of anybody.

The next thing which offends ‘A Templar’ is the roar which follows the line, ‘Frighted with false fire.’ and he finds this ‘inexpressibly painful.’ As a similar roar from several hundred people has followed the scene every evening for many nights past, a very large body of the public must be written down asses—unless, in-

deed, 'A Templar' himself misunderstands his subject. 'Of course the reason of this'—the roar; that is to say, the applause—'was that Mr. Irving had placed the climax of the scene where Shakespeare had not placed it,' we read. Throughout the article, 'A Templar' professes to have a comprehensive knowledge of what Shakespeare meant, which nothing but an arduous course of spirit-rapping could possibly have supplied. But is not this point (where the roar comes) the climax of the scene? I think it is; and even, strictly speaking, of the whole tragedy. The only definitive task which Hamlet accomplishes by successive steps is to find out the truth of the Ghost's accusation.

'I'll have these players
Play something like the murder of my
father
Before mine uncle,'

he says, and he arranges the play. 'If he but blench, I know my course.' The king does blench: Hamlet knows his course; but after this he carries out no set design, and leads up to no climax. Truly the death of the king is a climax to some extent; but this is not led up to; it springs from the treachery used against Hamlet's own life. 'The point envenom'd, too? Then venom to thy work,' and so retribution for the death of himself, his father, his mother, Polonius, Laertes, and Ophelia falls on the king. But this is not solely in revenge for his father's murder. Very soon after the play is over the Ghost again appears, and says:

'This visitation
Is but to whet thy almost blunted
purpose;'

and Hamlet often seems altogether to have forgotten his mission.

'The half-delirious, half-fantastic levity of the doggerel lines would have been an anti-climax,' 'A Templar' writes; only unfortunately, as we have seen, half-delirious, half-fantastic lines are duly spoken.

When our censor fears that 'the Lyceum audience might easily forget that any such device as feigning madness had ever entered Hamlet's thoughts,' he seems to infer that the Lyceum audiences receive their first impressions of the play from visiting the Lyceum; and this is probably in many cases an incorrect conclusion. I wholly differ, too, from his assertion that Mr. Irving never forgets 'that he is a melodramatic actor, and that gloom is the atmosphere he is bound to diffuse around him.' On the contrary, it seems to me that anything more pleasant and gracious than his reception of Horatio, his demeanour to the players, and his attempted reconciliation with Laertes, amongst other instances, cannot well be imagined. And if I knew what 'A Templar' meant by 'the mere dagger and bowl element of melodrama,' I think that I should disagree with him there.

Then, again, with reference to 'the sudden and wholly uncalled-for tone of insolence when Rosencrantz and Guildenstern smile without apparent cause.' What are Hamlet's feelings towards these 'friends'? We can judge from some of the speeches which Shakespeare—who, unfortunately, had not the opportunity of consulting 'A Templar' on the matter—sets down for them:

'HAMLET.* To be demanded of a
spunge, what replication should be made
by the son of a king?

Ros. Take you me for a sponge, my
lord?

* It is to be noted that the folio of 1603, and not the ordinary 'acting edition,' is followed in the arrangement of this scene between Hamlet, Rosencrantz, and Guildenstern. In this folio, the scene takes place in the third act, as at the Lyceum.

HAM. Ay, Sir, that sokes up the king's countenance, his rewards, his authorities. But such officers do the king best service in the end; he keeps them like an ape does nuts in the corner of his jaw; first mouthed to be last swallow'd. When he needs what you have gleaned it is but squeezing you, and, spunge, you shall be dry again.

ROS. I understand you not, my lord.

HAM. I am glad of it; a knavish speech sleeps in a foolish ear.

I need not multiply instances. There is hostility between them. Hamlet's welcome, after his discovery of their mission, conveys an insult. 'Your hands,' he says. 'Come then. The appurtenance of welcome is fashion and ceremony,' and Guildenstern's speech, 'This courtesy is not of the right breed,' borders on insolence, and shows the terms on which they stand. Hamlet so regards them, indeed, that in the end he is instrumental in bringing about their deaths; and is it to be wondered at that, seeing through their treachery, he should, when angered by their exchange of smiles, speak to them with contemptuous scorn? See how lamely they excuse themselves; the reason given for the smile is absurd. When 'A Templar' says that 'his manner to Polonius is characterised by absolute rudeness; and the dignified courtesy shown in that character by Mr. Chippendale makes the contrast more than commonly conspicuous,' the critic writes on the assumption that Polonius ought to show 'dignified courtesy.' But is it so? With all deference to Mr. Chippendale, who is an admirable actor, and in many characters quite unrivalled, I think not. 'These tedious old fools,' Hamlet says of him. 'That great baby, you see there, is not yet out of his swaddling clouts.' 'Thou wretched, rash, intruding fool,' he exclaims when he has slain him. And the speeches of Polonius himself tend to prove that he is not dignified, but fussy and tedious—in-

clined to pry and interfere, to hover round Hamlet, annoy him, and set traps to test him. Hamlet is sick of him, and no wonder. 'My honourable lord, I will most humbly take my leave of you.' 'You cannot, Sir, take from me anything that I will more willingly part withal, except my life—except my life, except my life.' Hamlet constantly derides him, and takes no pains to hide that he despises him. To prove which fact 'A Templar' has only to study the text.

One more extract, and I conclude; not for lack of matter, but because I hope readers will admit that enough has been said to show that 'A Templar's' criticism is superficial and one-sided. Putting his own interpretation on the speech, 'I will speak daggers to her, but use none,' he asserts that 'for the son's unquenchable love for his mother, and for his own heart bursting in the conflict of duty with filial instinct—for the prominence of these feelings in Mr. Irving's performance we look in vain.' Now, consider what humour Hamlet is in before he meets his mother:

'Now could I drink hot blood,
And do such bitter business as the day
Would quake to look on.'

Irritated by his false friends ('Why, do you think that I am easier to be play'd on than a pipe? Call me what instrument you will, though you can fret me, you cannot play upon me'); irritated by Polonius ('they fool me to the top of my bent'); enraged by the thoughts which rush into his mind as he watches the king praying, and with a heart full of the bitterness and thirst for vengeance which the justification of his suspicions has awakened—with these conflicting emotions burning within him, he goes to his mother's closet. Is it unnatural that he

should speak bitterly, or that his anger should increase when he finds that he is watched from behind the arras? Yet he never loses his filial love and instinct even before the Ghost appears; and after it has come and bidden him to 'step between her and her fighting soul,' his voice and manner seem, to me, exquisitely tender. The look of unutterable love in his face, and the tone of anguish in his voice as he sinks at her feet, and buries his head on her knees, are, to my mind, infinitely pathetic.

I part reluctantly from a theme which has so deeply impressed me, and I earnestly hope that if any readers of this paper have been led astray by carping criticism, they will—not adopt my views, but go and judge for themselves. What I have written may read like a defence; but in truth Mr. Irving needs no defence. I have taken exception to several points at different times; but a study of the text has, in nearly every case, shown that the actor is correct in his interpretation. Mr. Irving may not be perfect; his walk is at times ungraceful; and on the two occasions when the text obliges him to raise his voice to a very high pitch his tones are somewhat hard. These, however, are minor matters. It seems to me that Mr. Irving *realises* the character, and by art, which is never apparent, conveys his realisation to the audience; that he is absolutely consistent from beginning to end, and that the performance is, in short—what I for one never expected to see—an *embodiment* of Shakespeare's Hamlet.

'An old-fashioned winter' has come at last; the Christmas landscape is white as far as the eye can see, and those of us who were

beginning to believe that in the general decadence of men and things—for what is as it used to be in the glorious days when all the world was young?—even the seasons had become deranged, are forced to recognise the fact that nature can assert her supremacy when she likes, just as in the days of yore. For some years past it has seemed that the maddest occupation a man could follow was the manufacturing of skates, but now the trade is looking up, and over the smooth surface of many a hundred ponds and lakes society of all ranks glides, while red-faced little boys, with woollen comforters round their necks, 'keep the pot a-boiling,' down many a slide, and initiate their juniors into the mystery of 'the cobbler's knock.' Is any spectacle in the world more replete with grace and delight than that of a typical English girl, the glow of health and exercise on her cheeks, in neatly-fitting boots, and a warm fur jacket wrapped up to her white throat, skimming lightly through the keen air? I trow not. Here is the poetry of nature, indeed, and I could well fill the space allotted to me with rhapsodies on so delicious a picture. Who would disagree?

The query calls up the vision of a face shrouded in vexation as it gazes from the window of a breakfast-room down a long avenue, where the mark of carriage-wheels is being rapidly obliterated by the fast-falling snow, and the white branches of the trees look fantastically beautiful, although as unlike their leafy selves with verdure clad as can well be. The malcontent is Martingale, down in the country for a fortnight's hunting at the house of all others from which the enthusiast may best follow that most English and excellent of pastimes. Let us sym-

pathise with Martingale. Last night, as he drove from the station along the familiar way, each field and lane had its pleasurable memories. That stiff post and rail he negotiated with only two companions, and they killed in the open, after the smartest forty minutes the Grassmere had ever known. The stile by the oak-tree was impressed upon his recollection by a fall which had seemed likely to stop hunting for that day, if not for several weeks after; but no harm was done, and in half a minute he and the bay mare were up and doing. At the corner of that spinny on the hillside he had waited, believing, against the general opinion, that the fox would break, and his knowledge of woodcraft had been rewarded by a start, and by the avoidance of the big brook down in the hollow, which had emptied so many saddles and filled so many boots.

Martingale goes to bed and dreams of performing unheard-of achievements, of cutting down well-mounted fields, and presenting the most bushy of brushes from the most artful of foxes to the most charming of damsels. What versemaker is responsible for the very colloquial lines which describe the doings and sensations of the modern Nimrod? Who is it that cries?

'Come, generous Phœbus! and kindly assist me,

Let thoughts shape themselves into smooth-running rhyme.

Help, good brother sportsman, should couplets resist me—

For you were a pretty good whip in your time.

And, Pegasus, come, lend me hold of your bridle,

And mind that you don't let me down with a bump.

Let horses of dull earth be stubborn and idle,

But you are the steed that can gallop and jump.

'*En avant.* Oh, what joy 'tis, when day is just dawning

(The wind is south-west, there are clouds in the sky

Which, the song says, "proclaim it a fine hunting morning"),

On the ground by your bedside your tops to espy,

And also your——! Well, Muse, I can't bear distressing

A lady like you, though I have heard your own

Sex sometimes *do* wear them; so, please, while I'm dressing,

In the breakfast-room wait; I shall shortly be down.'

Martingale follows his hero through the process of breakfasting, and takes him safely, with a lovely companion to whom he appears much attached, to the meet.

'There's just time to look to the last preparation,

Note the bridle, and see that the girths are drawn tight.

With our friends we're exchanging a brief salutation,

When we hear "Gone away!" there, away to the right.

'What a rush! "Annie, dear, to avoid them, we'd better

Just cross o'er this hedge, over into the plough;

Loose the little mare's head—she'll soon go if you let her;

Up! that's it! We shan't be long catching them now."

'The plough's rather heavy; we steady our horses,

Their bleed is well up, and they're pulling with force.

'Tis always the best way to husband resources

(Would Annie would husband! *I'd* be the resource!).

We're speedily sailing away to the fore, I

Think we've every prospect of seeing the run;

For *primo aspirat fortuna labori*—

A thing is half finished when neatly begun.

'Some rails next appear, and we lightly pop o'er them,

And then comes a bullfinch: most make for the gate,

For they don't much approve of the country before them.

"I almost think we'd better not tempt our fate;

What say you? You *will* go? Of course, then, I'm ready;
If you say you will, small use my saying 'No.'

Catch hold of your bridle, and just keep her steady;

Now, rouse her a little! Crash!
Over we go!"

'Kingston Brook is in front, and of it I'm no lover.

There's *one* way to do it, and that's with a dash.

But Annie is leading—she lightly pops over—

I follow—we rise! Down! No! Done with a splash!"

Martingale puts himself into his hero's place, except that no splash follows his (imaginative) water jumping. But, alas! when the blind is drawn up in the morning, rime has frosted patterns on his window, and instead of the immaculate pinks, the well-cleaned boots, and those spotless nether garments which clasp his knees so tightly and fit so closely to the saddle, he is forced to don the tweed of every-day life, and pass the day in girding at the 'roping icicles upon the house's thatch.'

Shakespeare could not have wanted to hunt while he was writing so cheerfully of the time

'When icicles hang by the wall,
And Dick the shepherd blows his nail;

And Tom bears logs into the hall,
And milk comes frozen in the pail.

'When all aloud the wind doth blow,
And coughing drowns the parson's saw;

And birds sit brooding in the snow,
And Marian's nose looks red and raw.'

Was ever a picture of winter in the country painted in so few words?

Surely the horses never look so fit and like going as on those frosty days when it is impossible to put them to the test, and they stand in their stalls with warm clothing on, while the men who would fain be on their backs must perforce lounge about on bins and against

posts, and gratify the attendant groom with compliment and criticism between the puffs of the numerous cigars, for the consumption of which hard weather and lack of occupation form excuses; but this is the gloomy side of the picture. Let us hope that when these lines have found their way to country houses, such as we write about, Martingale and his friends may be scudding over hill and lea, and that, as this is read, it may make the open season all the more pleasant by contrast with those dull days when one is awakened by the announcement, 'Hard frost, Sir; afraid there'll be no hunting to-day.'

English journalism is an institution of which the country may well be proud. Many men whose ability, industry, and scholarship would win them lasting fame in other professions pass their lives anonymously away, and die unknown, except to a small circle, after a life of labour which, though perhaps not altogether ill-paid, offers fewer prizes than almost any other calling requiring equal attainments. On the outskirts of the profession, however, there are a number of journals which carry on a sort of *guerilla* warfare, and earn notoriety by an assumption of knowledge which they do not possess about highly-placed persons, and by reckless and malevolent attacks upon whosoever chances to offend them.

'The tiny trumpeting gnat can break our dream

When it is sweetest; and the vermin voices here

May buzz so loud—we scorn them, but they sting.'

Guinevere says; and the lines might be taken as a motto for some of those journals, could one be found with sufficient honesty to tell the truth.

Pray let it be understood that these strictures are general, applying to a class of pseudo-literature, and not to any special publication; and I wish to emphasise this statement, because I have some remarks to make about a particular journal, the 'World,' which has lately come into existence.

I must confess to a most profound contempt for the tone of the periodical, and for what I imagine to be the system upon which it is conducted. Scarcely a week has passed since its introduction that I have not been irritated by some article which I have considered extremely unfair, utterly incorrect, or else in the grossest bad taste; but the sublime impudence of an assertion in a sort of epilogue to the first volume induces me to accept a challenge therein contained, and see how far the editor's professions are consistent with the truth. 'The essence of scurrility,' the article says, 'is foul and needless abuse; the essence of personality is the unnecessary intrusion of private details in the discussion of public affairs and in the criticism of public men. These are definitions which we presume no one will refuse to accept. We defy the most fastidiously hostile of our censors to point to a single article or to a single paragraph in the "World," since the first day of its appearance, which can be justly held to come within the scope of either.'

Let us consider the career and achievements of this Aristidean publication. The 'World' was first brought prominently into notice by the investigation in the police courts of a vulgar street brawl, in which one of its contributors and a gentleman who considered that the paper had ill-used him were engaged. I am informed that the

affair created great excitement in the City, where the combatants appear to have been interested in rival schemes connected with the telegraphic companies; but my knowledge of City matters is of the smallest. I forget, if I ever knew, the details of the case. The next subject upon which the 'World' presumed to treat was 'the Prince of Wales's debts.' Of course the 'World' might have held forth on this theme till doomsday, and no one would have heeded. A journal of position, however, with a want of good feeling which journals of position rarely show, took up the matter—probably from the utter dearth of existent news, though this is no excuse—and then a friend of the Prince made answer: his Royal Highness did not propose to appeal to either the Queen or to the nation to pay his debts, for the excellent reason that he had no debts, and was in the habit of paying his own bills out of his own income. I fancy that this did somewhat abash the insolence of the 'World,' and it turned its attention to smaller things. Mr. Arthur à Beckett, a gentleman, contrived to offend the journal. I think that those who read the article will admit that the 'World,' which describes scurrility with so much *naïveté*, is as much at home in the practice as in the definition; for, finding nothing to blame in Mr. à Beckett's life, it attacked his late father, a scholar, a gentleman of position, and an intimate associate of the first men of his time. Shortly after this there appeared a paragraph, criticising the behaviour of the Queen, which must have afforded intense satisfaction to the three or four red republicans who attend the galleries of theatres for the purpose of hissing the National Anthem. The latest

victims are the dramatic critics, who are angrily maligned in a letter bearing the signature of 'The Ghost that Walks':—

'Mr. Oxenford, the critic of the "Times," is a ripe scholar, and his remarks are usually worthy of perusal,' the correspondent says; and this is certainly the case; 'but with this one exception,' he continues, 'I do not know of a single critic on the daily press who does not lay himself open to the charge of being biassed in his views of plays and players by extraneous influences.'

'I believe that I am not wrong in saying that, in almost every case, these gentlemen, either openly or secretly, send their own plays to the managers of theatres, with a request that they may be produced. If the play be refused and another brought out instead of it, it is not in human nature to suppose that the critic will not take a somewhat jaundiced view of the work of a successful rival; whereas, if the play be accepted, the judgment of the manager is considered so excellent, that nothing which he may produce can be wrong.'

'It is evident that so long as the official criticisms of stage performances depend upon the wine that is poured into the mouths of critics, the acceptance or the rejection by managers of their literary efforts, and the amount of subserviency which is paid to newspaper proprietors, there is little hope of those who affect to guide public opinion proving anything but false lights.'

Now, it happens that I have the honour of calling some of these gentlemen my very good friends; and though none of them would condescend to answer reckless assertions which every one who knows anything about the matter knows to be absolutely false, I am

moved to protest, because the purity of dramatic criticism is a subject which concerns almost everybody. How much eleemosynary liquor the writer imagines it would take to bribe a critic, he omits to state. The fact is, 'The Ghost that Walks' knows how he would be influenced, were he a critic, and thinks that the critics behave as he would if he had the chance. As the critics are gentlemen, his conclusion is manifestly inconsequent. Except Mr. Oxenford, there is not a single playwright amongst them. One gentleman writes pantomimes, and has done so any time these twenty-five years; another adapted a trivial French piece some years ago, and yet another two short pieces in one act. Many of the critics, for reasons which their traducer would not be able to understand, do not write for the stage because they are critics. 'The Ghost that Walks' should rather sign himself 'The Cur that Snarls,' viciously snapping round the heels of honest men.

Why should the 'World' be so bitter against these gentlemen? It is a strange coincidence that Mr. Edmund Yates, whose name has been publicly announced in connection with this paper, has suffered somewhat at their hands: but his sufferings have only been the impartial reward of his merits. Some years ago, when the Prince of Wales's Theatre was at the height of its reputation, and when the better class of playgoers were eager for its success, a play, entitled 'Tame Cats,' and bearing Mr. Yates's name, was announced. The cast, unless I am mistaken, included Misses Marie Wilton and Lydia Foote; Messrs. Hare, Bancroft, Montague, and other special favourites; and the name of Mr. Yates at that time was an

attraction in itself, because he had written some good, and few worthless, stories. For nearly twenty minutes 'Tame Cats' enjoyed a career of mild prosperity; then it waxed and waned, and it was soon made unmistakably apparent that the public not only did not enjoy, but absolutely refused to hear any more of Mr. Yates's 'Tame Cats.' But the critics were not responsible for the timely demise of these feeble and unnecessary animals: it was the public that laughed them to death; and I must say they very richly deserved their fate.

What makes the 'World' so dangerous in its injustice—if I may conclude that it has been shown to be unjust—is the fact that writers of power and ability have contributed to its columns. There is room, and a certain success, for a paper which carries out the professions made by the 'World'; but it is indispensably necessary that it should be conducted with undeviating honesty of purpose, and that scurrility, of which the editor is clearly so excellent a judge, should be scrupulously avoided.

For those who love pictures—and what reader of this magazine does not?—a veritable feast has been prepared at the Academy, where an exhibition of the old masters is now being held. Besides the pleasure of contemplating true art, is there not delight to be found in pondering on the lives of those old worthies, so long since dead and gone, in thinking of the events which took place around them, of the sights which met their eyes as they turned from their work, perchance to look down on the antique street? The same canvas on which they gazed we see; but how different are the surroundings! I

can never look at a work by Sir Joshua without imagining the beaux and belles of a former day standing round his easel, with complimentary criticism, while Dr. Goldsmith, in a once gorgeous velvet coat, stands a little back from the fashionable throng, saying very civil things when spoken to, but forming his own shrewd opinion of all that goes on around him. Mr. Garrick is more at home with the great folk, and takes his part in the conversation; while Dr. Johnson gives his view in ponderous sentences of premeditated rotundity. Venice, as it appeared to Canaletto, may here be seen; Raphael, Titian, Murillo, Velasquez, Rembrandt, Andrea del Sarto, Tintoretto, and others of the great ones gone, are represented. Here, too, is one of Fra Filippo Lippi's Madonnas, recalling the story of his wild life. Is this pure face that of Lucretia Buti, the nun whose ruin the young monkish painter worked? 'Sigh no more, ladies, sigh no more; men were deceivers ever.' Words of wisdom, penned nearly two hundred years after the gold background which gleams so brightly here to-day was laid on in Florence. These were early days. Such news of England as found its way to Italy told only of victories over the French at Crecy and Poitiers, and a little later of civil war between the rival houses of York and Lancaster; and here is Fra Lippi's picture, fresh and beautiful, though four centuries have passed away.

The exhibition includes works of Sir A. W. Callcott, R.A., and D. Maclise, R.A.; and there are besides pictures of Crome, Gainsborough, Hogarth, Turner, and others. To give anything like due examination to a tithe of what is here is impossible. No. 20 is a sea piece by David Cox, the

waves dashed in by the bold hand of experience and appreciation; and Cotman's (32) 'Haybarges Becalmed' should not be passed over, if only for the truth with which the atmospheric effect is realised. Sir Joshua is well represented in Gallery III., chiefly by portraits, though there is a 'Nymph and Child' (No. 63), somewhat academic in treatment, but of value. One of the pictures (No. 65), 'Study of a Female Head,' is delicate and pleasing, and may well be studied by amateurs as a contrast to the more powerful and vigorous 'Head of an Anchorite' by Vandyke, next to which it is hung. Turner's magnificent 'Wreck of the Minotaur' is here (158), with such foaming waves as only he could paint. Near to this (160) are Sir Joshua's portraits of the Ladies Elizabeth and Henrietta Montagu, a picture which Walpole called 'chalky,' and in that ver-

dict most persons will agree; indeed it is impossible to deny that the glazing, and with it the colour, has worn off in several of Sir Joshua's pictures, and that what appeared 'chalky' to a connoisseur a hundred years ago is very much more so now. Whether in the by-gone days ladies were accustomed to powder their faces till the colour and texture of the skin were quite invisible, I cannot tell. It may be that is the reason why Lady Frances Wyndham's countenance (256) looks so ghostlike, and that Sir Joshua transferred to his canvas exactly what he saw before him. I pass gem after gem, but must call attention to the wonderfully lifelike face Mytens has given to the Earl of Baltimore (193). This, and Vandyke's picture of the elder Doria (219), are well-nigh unsurpassable.

Lovers of art will miss the exhibition.

RAPIER.



NEW BOOKS RECEIVED.

'The Blossoming of an Aloe.'
By Mrs. Cashel Hoey. *Hurst and Blackett.*

'Sorrow and Song.' By Henry Curwen. *Henry S. King and Co.*

'Shelley Memorials.' Edited by Lady Shelley. *Henry S. King and Co.*

WE are not exaggerating when we say that 'The Blossoming of an Aloe' is one of the prettiest stories we have read for a long time. The plot is very simple, the motto of the book telling its own tale. 'She was of those who are content to wait for the blossoming of the aloe; and who do not weary of the hundred years.' David Mervyn, a young officer, marries secretly a girl much beneath him in station, whilst the heroine of the novel, Anne Cairnes, is, unknown to all but herself, in love with him. His regiment is ordered to the Crimea, and a false report of his death kills his wife, whom he had left in feeble health. Lady Mervyn, his mother, who has discovered his marriage, visits his wife privately, only to find she has died, leaving an infant girl behind her. Being very desirous that her son, on his return to England, should have all traces of his fatal error swept away, and be free to contract a marriage with Anne Cairnes, Lady Mervyn, on pretence of taking the child to her own home, causes it to be delivered to the care of an old servant, who is to bring it up in the country. As the servant travels back to her house she is killed in a railway accident, and the child is supposed to be killed also. Under what circumstances and through whose intervention

Lucy is restored to her father, and Sir David Mervyn and Anne Cairnes behold the blossoming of their aloe, we leave our readers to discover for themselves, and we can assure them they will be repaid for their trouble. The characters of Mr. and Mrs. Ferris, the humble but affectionate relations of Lucy, and of Lucy herself, are very naturally painted, neither overdrawn nor sketched from fancy portraits. David Mervyn is a specimen of a fine, honest, faithful-hearted Englishman, and Anne Cairnes must win the sympathy of any one who admires independence and constancy in women. The second story in these volumes, 'The Queen's Token,' has already appeared in the pages of 'London Society,' and therefore it would be out of place to criticise it here; but, from the favour with which it was received as a serial, we have no doubt it will be equally admired in its present dress.

* * * * *

The next book on our list treats of an ever-fruitful subject, the sorrows to which the highly-strung hearts of men of genius are subjected during their transit through a world for which they are unfitted. Mr. Curwen might have swelled his volumes to any number, for there is scarcely a name of note that has not some sad story attached to it. As it is, the two before us treat of three lives each, Henry Murger, Novalis, Alexander Petöfi, Honoré de Balzac, Edgar Allan Poe, and André Chénier. It is melancholy to observe how the career of each of these great intellects, if not blighted, was saddened by either the love, the death, or the treach-

ery of women. Henry Murger was never the same after Marie had deserted him for his painter friend Bisson. As his biographer says, 'His whole nature was changed. He had entered bitterly into manhood, and had, alas! lost faith in the purity of woman.' The distress of his mind had such an effect upon his body that he was never out of the hospital for any length of time together from that day to the hour of his death. His disease was caused by 'insufficient diet, want of proper rest, and an overstrain of mental power.'

This is how he writes of Marie, more than a year after she had left him: 'Five days since I was walking in a street dreaming of Marie; suddenly a woman came out of a turning. It was she. My heart almost broke from my breast; I clutched hold of something, or I should have fallen. She paled slightly, and went her way. Alas! now I dream of her ten times more than ever, and love her as much as I loved her two years ago. God knows how long it will take to chase this miserable folly from my head and from my brain.' It was never chased in this life. Henry Murger grew hard and cynical before his death, but the thought of 'Marie' ran through all his bitterness, as it had through his love. Novalis was not much more fortunate, but his grief arose from the death of 'Sophie,' who, according to his own statement, was 'one of the noblest and most ideal of beings who have ever been, or ever shall be, on this earth. The loveliest creatures must most have resembled her.' In like manner had Petöfi to mourn the early death of 'Etelka.' 'Petöfi's grief was overpowering. For months he abandoned his friends, neglected work, thought of nothing

but her memory, and even when he took the pen again in hand his poems were all "Cypress Leaves," which, collected and published in 1845, found in their passionate intensity a way to every womanly breast.' Thus do great hearts and great minds too often go together.

* * * * *

The 'Shelley Memorials' might aptly have formed part of the volumes we have just mentioned. Here we have the poet's struggles for fame and for fortune—his disappointments in love and in life—the straining of his delicately organised though mighty mind, fully detailed, until we seem to read his very soul. Yet the most interesting part of the narrative, to us, is the devotion and grief of Mary Shelley for her dead husband. Her letters and those parts of her private diary which are here given to the reader are one of the most touching pictures of woman's love ever made public. The terms in which, after his death, she constantly alludes to her 'own beloved—the exalted and divine Shelley'—'the best and most beautiful'—show what her feelings were concerning him. On the 3rd of February, 1823, she writes, 'I thought I heard my Shelley call me—not my Shelley in heaven—but my Shelley, my companion in my daily tasks. I was reading; I heard a voice say "Mary!" "It is Shelley!" I thought—the revulsion was of agony. Never more!'

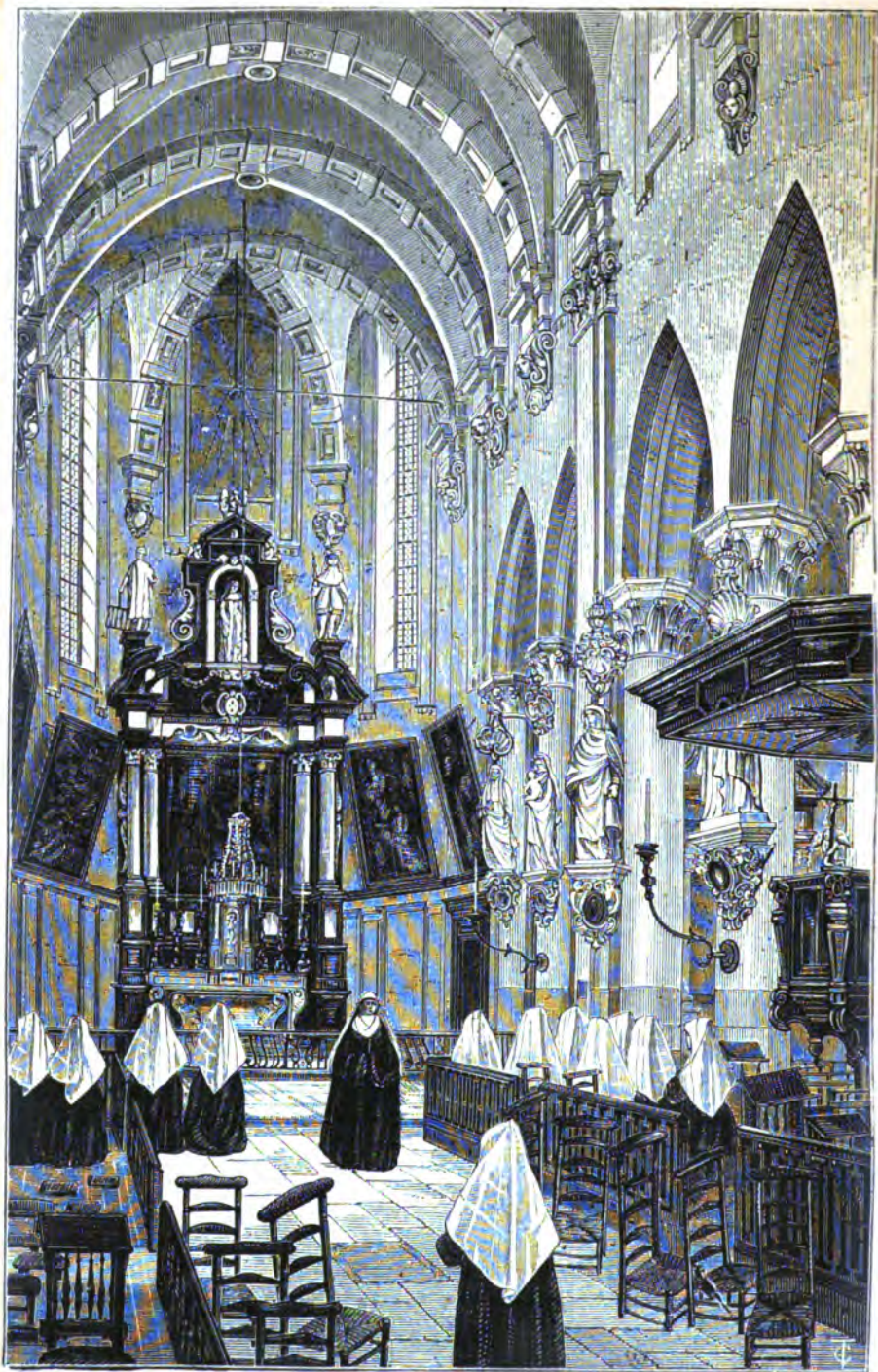
We owe a great deal to Lady Shelley for having edited these memorials. Few biographers have done their work so ably, yet so simply. Shelley is a name enshrined in the hearts of most of his countrymen; his wild, fitful character, romantic life, and early violent death wake chords of sympathy in every breast; and

when to these circumstances is added the charm of his poetic nature, no subject could be found the life of whom would more fittingly make a pleasant narrative. The volume before us is in its third edition; we trust it may go into several more. It is embellished by an excellent steel engraving of the portrait of Shelley

taken by Miss Curran at Rome in 1818, and now in the possession of his son, Sir Percy Shelley, of Boscombe Manor, Hants. The biography concludes with a fragmentary essay on Christianity, which was found amongst Shelley's papers in the imperfect state in which it is now produced.

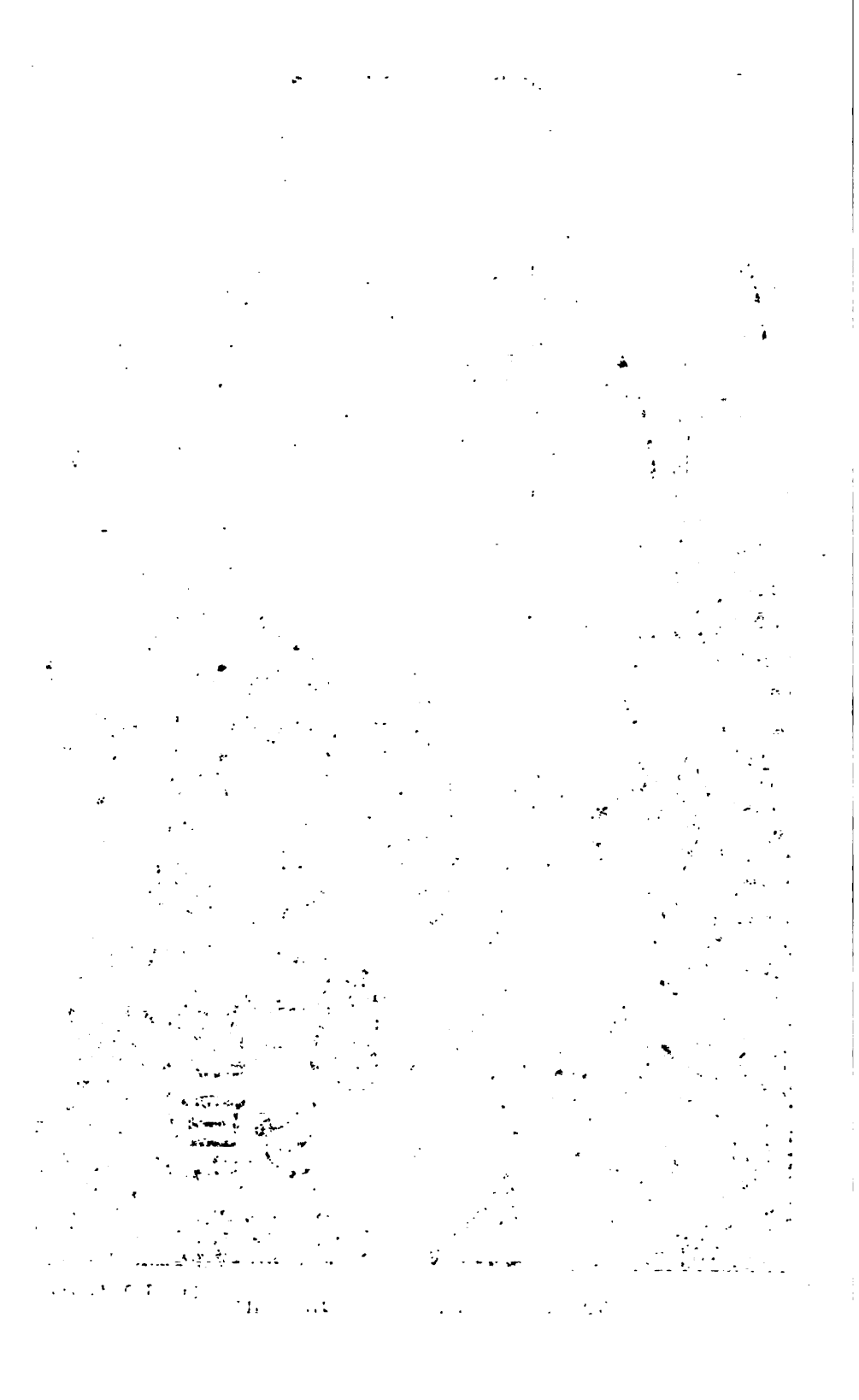






Drawn by C. Turner.]

THE CHURCH OF THE BÉGUINAGE.



LONDON SOCIETY.

MARCH, 1875.

ABOVE SUSPICION.

BY MRS. J. H. RIDDELL.

CHAPTER XVII.

COLONEL LESCHELLES IS ASTONISHED.

WITH stories, quotations, and oftentimes more serious conversation on subjects of which even worldly men must occasionally take thought, Mr. Wright beguiled his visitor until the morning came round when all that remained of the Squire was to be laid in the ground.

To the brilliant sunshine which had made such brightness on Christmas Day, even in the Essex Marshes, there succeeded a dull leaden sky, giving promise of more snow, and more after that.

In due time the promise was fulfilled. The heavens were opened, and snow fell for two days and nights without cessation.

'God bless me!' said the Curate, looking out at the untrodden road and the churchyard, where the graves were buried under a mysterious pall of white, soft flakes, 'I don't know—I don't, indeed, know how we are going to bury that poor fellow at all.'

And indeed, had his relations not been hungering and thirsting to know the contents of his will, in all probability the body of Squire Olier might have lain quietly enough in his own room at the Grange till the weather moderated; but as matters stood each man and

each woman interested in the testamentary disposition of his property felt it was unseemly for him to keep the rightful owner out of possession beyond eight days. Accordingly, at the end of that time the late Squire's remains were carried to the churchyard, where, by dint of bribes and by liberal allowances of strong liquors, a grave had been prepared; and, while the mourners stood ankle deep in snow, which had already drifted again over the ground cleared for them to occupy—while the sleet soaked through Mr. Wright's surplice, and wetted the leaves of the open Prayer-book—while the wind moaned over the mournful expanse of lands stretching away to the river and the German Ocean, and the hair of those gathered round the place where their dear brother departed was to be wrapped up till eternity, was dripping as if they had one and all just emerged from a bath, the Curate read the funeral service over all that was left of Squire Olier.

A few minutes, and the words, few and solemn, had been spoken, dust was gone down into the dust, ashes were returned to ashes. Ere long, one dark mound could be distinguished in the churchyard,

looking like a rent in a white mantle worn over a black dress; but soon the falling snow covered that away from sight also. From a window in the vicarage, Mr. Wright noticed the flakes falling thick and soft on the Squire's grave.

'Poor fellow!' he thought, 'his was a lonely life, and he is even more lonely in death than men are usually. By this time those harpies know how the property is left.'

Which was correct. By that time the harpies, who had stopped for a few minutes at the vicarage, on their return from the funeral, to swallow some brandy, were in the wainscoted parlour, where Mr. Wright had received Colonel Leschelles, listening to the last codicil in the late Squire's will. In it was left, in token of kindness and good-will, a hundred guineas to Louis Leschelles, his cousin. As for the bulk of the estate, it was willed to a certain Charles Olier, hateful for many reasons to most of his kinsfolk. Being in Norway at the time of Squire Olier's death, he did not chance to be present. So those to whom no legacies were left, and their number seemed legion, were forced to vent their anger on the only person within their reach, Colonel Leschelles.

'What right had he to a hundred guineas or a hundred pence?' they asked each other, and eventually asked him.

'I must decline to answer that question,' said the Colonel stiffly, who, having heard from Mr. Wright that Squire Olier's estate might have been his almost for the picking up, felt, perhaps, a little natural disappointment at having been, if remembered at all, remembered to so little purpose; and then, after bowing to the assembled company, he left the room, and made his way back to the vicar-

age, where he had consented to remain for another night.

'Well?' said the Curate interrogatively, as he opened the door to welcome his visitor.

'Charles Olier has the property. There are the usual legacies. Several worthy people seem mightily disappointed, and I am a richer man by a hundred guineas than I was a fortnight ago.'

'Charles Olier!' exclaimed Mr. Wright. 'Why, he has the name of being a second Elves. They say he would skin a — Ahem!' finished the Curate, who had for the moment allowed excitement to triumph over rigid decorum.

'And sell the hide,' finished the Colonel. 'Yes; what is said is quite true, I am afraid.'

'You might have had the place,' went on the Curate, 'if —'

'If "ifs and ands," you remember,' quoted Colonel Leschelles, with a smile. 'Yes; I suppose I might if an "if" and an "and" had both been different. As matters stand, however, it is a matter of no consequence to me. That which we have never expected it can be no disappointment not to receive, and, I am thankful to say, I have enough, and more than enough to satisfy all my wants.'

That night the Curate, feeling, probably, the fact of Squire Olier being buried and his will read had removed a weight from his mind, proved himself a more agreeable companion than ever; in fact, so agreeable did he continue to make Colonel Leschelles think him that the gallant officer voluntarily promised to spend Christmas with Mr. Wright, in whatever part of the three kingdoms that gentleman might be, so long as the Colonel remained in England.

'And I only wish I had a fat rectory in my gift,' added the officer, 'you should have it without the asking.'

Whereupon Mr. Wright, with a sly twinkle in his eyes, quoted the last line of the epigram which commences—

'A vicar long ill who treasured up wealth,
Bade his curate each Sunday to pray
for his health,'

and ends with the curate's reply to a somewhat impertinent inquirer into the state of his own feelings—

'I've ne'er prayed for his Death, though
I have for his Living.'

Within a few weeks after Colonel Leschelles' departure there arrived at the vicarage a note from Mr. Wright's late visitor, accompanied by a gold watch and chain, of which the Curate's acceptance was requested in a few kindly and well-chosen words.

It is needless to say the Curate accepted the gift in a note containing many words.

'A most appropriate present,' thought Mr. Wright, laying aside the turnip-shaped, white-faced silver repeater, inherited from his father, he had hitherto been fain to wear; and indeed so it proved.

'The watch and chain were always,' so the Curate often remarked to Mrs. Wright, 'as good as twenty pounds to them;' and before many years had elapsed twenty pounds had been so often raised upon the articles that one facetious jeweller remarked to his foreman he thought they might be trusted to come to his shop alone.

If Mr. Wright had ever calculated the price he paid for that money, he would have found it considerably exceeded the probable first cost of the trinkets.

In whatever straits the family found themselves about Christmas time—and their straits then were occasionally very grievous—money was generally procured to rescue Mr. Wright's watch from the ac-

commodating Israelite who held it in charge for so large a portion of each year; or if that were impossible, he at least liberated his chain from the enemy's hands, and attached to it the old-fashioned repeater, which, not being worth a sixpence, was always at home and available when its more valuable relative was detained abroad on particular business.

Of course, on such occasions, Colonel Leschelles knew well enough the second calling of the watchmaker who was 'regulating' his present, but, being a man of the world, he took the Wrights as he found them, and acknowledged to his own heart that many persons with whom he was acquainted, and who took care of their jewelry for themselves, were not one-half so pleasant, or so hospitable, or so lively as the impecunious clergyman and his wife.

Long before Mr. Wright became rector of Fisherton, Colonel Leschelles had been made free of the state of his affairs. At a very early period of their acquaintance, Mr. Wright had requested his good friend—'whom I hope eventually to call my old friend,' added that accomplished letter-writer in a parenthesis—to lend him an amount which, though it would no doubt seem ridiculously small to one blessed with such abundance,' meant temporal salvation to the Curate, his dear Selina, his children, including a recently-arrived baby, and every creature connected with the establishment. 'In a sentence,' said Mr. Wright, after having devoted many sentences to the explanation, 'I am goaded almost to madness by the want—remember little things are great to little people—of twenty-five pounds. I know, my dear Colonel, you are just the man to help a friend at such a pinch, and will not despise him for this

frank confession. I inclose my I O U for the amount, which I shall repay, D.V., in three months, with thanks and interest at five per cent. per annum, and shall feel eternally obliged if you will send me your cheque, open if possible, by return of post.'

To which the Colonel diplomatically replied, that as he had few good friends, and could not afford to lose the regard of any one of those few, on principle he always refused to *lend* money.

'If a man,' he explained, 'lent money, it could only be in the expectation of having it repaid at some not remote period, when it might be most unpleasant to the borrower to have the subject mentioned. At the same time,' he added, 'I am always most anxious to help a friend if it lies in my power to do so, and I therefore, with much regret that I am unable to send the whole of the amount you name, inclose my cheque for ten pounds, which I beg you will consider as in every respect your own, and deal with accordingly.'

'He is no fool, Selina,' was Mr. Wright's comment on this epistle. 'He knows no gentleman can ask another to give him money, and that after such a letter I can never trouble him again.'

'But you are surely not going to return the cheque?' cried out Mrs. Wright in alarm.

'No, my dear, I am going to keep it as a *personal favour* to him. From *any other* man I could not, of course, accept ten pounds as a gift. Why, he is a comparative stranger!'

'Almost a total stranger,' agreed Mrs. Wright; and then the humour of the thing struck her, and, being slightly hysterical, she laughed long and heartily at Dion's way of 'putting things.'

When Mr. Wright took posses-

sion of the living of Fisherton, Colonel Leschelles was older than had been the case when he first met the clergyman in Essex Marshes. If he did not note the fact, the Reverend Dionysius and his better-half were more astute.

Already they were thinking about his will and the legacy he might leave to them or one of the dear children; and once when Mr. Wright was carving the Christmas turkey he caught himself considering how much the Colonel had aged, and wondering how he would cut up, and who were likely to get the best slices.

'God forgive me!' thought poor Mr. Wright, thumping himself on the chest; 'I am no better than those Olier vultures who, smelling the carcass afar off, gathered hoping to have share of the spoil.' From which it will be seen that the Rector had moments of self-accusation and repentance, and that, although he generally went about the world thanking the Lord he and Selina were not as other men and women, it sometimes did occur to him that they were not a whit better than the publicans and sinners who contributed to their need.

On the Christmas Eve following Miss Miles' arrival at Fisherton, the Rector was, however, for once able to meet his visitor with a cheerful face which masked no ugly thoughts of legacies or creditors.

Everything in this life is comparative, and for the Rector to have no writs or summonses pressing immediately for attention meant probably as much ease of mind as it does to a millionaire to have secured a picture at his own price, or to have outbidden a rival in the matter of some precious edition.

Colonel Leschelles arrived about five o'clock, and it was as good as

a puppet-show to see the Rector's greeting.

He did not say a word in the first fulness of rejoicing. With his head turned a little on one side, he clasped the Colonel's hand with a pressure which implied, 'I am too glad to see you to be able to tell you how happy I feel to have you here once more;' and, indeed, his manner did convey all this, and more.

'God bless you!' he murmured at length. 'Welcome again to Fisherton. Come in, come in. Don't stay out in the cold. Let me settle with the man. There, now we have got you to ourselves again. Selina! Where's Selina? My dear, the Colonel has come.'

Considering that Selina had been expecting his arrival for half an hour previously, the visitor's appearance could scarcely have proved a surprise to Mrs. Wright; but, coming out of the drawing-room, arrayed, in honour of the Colonel, in a silk dress made with a low bodice and short sleeves, a scarf over her shoulders, bracelets of no particular material, or beauty, or worth, on her arms, her back hair wreathed round a comb in a variety of singular and charming devices, and the eternal curls falling in a graceful, not to say pathetic, manner on each side of her face, Mrs. Wright really acted a pleasant little byplay of surprise admirably.

With a heightened colour, and a smile which was sweet as well as plaintive, and a light of greeting in her eyes, which no affectation could have kindled, she took his hand in both of hers, and, saying in her pretty Irish accent—that accent which sounds so sweet falling from the lips of a gentlewoman when she does not give one too much of it—'I am very glad to see you, indeed,' lifted her eyes for a moment to the

Colonel's face, then modestly withdrew them from a contemplation of his features; but that moment told her a tale.

'My dear,' she said to the Rev. Dion, while Colonel Leschelles, making his toilet in the apartment vacated by Miss Miles, was thinking that with his figure, by Jove, he might pass for not more than forty or forty-five when the weather was mild and he was not pulled up with that confounded rheumatism, 'My dear, he gets awfully old. I think he must have added at least twenty years to his age since I saw him last.'

'Pooh!' was the Rector's answer. 'You only think so because you have been latterly looking continually upon young faces. The Colonel can't put back the clock, even with the help of tight frock-coats and leaden combs; but it is not running on with him, and so much the better. Good people are scarce, and we cannot afford to part with one of them—before his appointed time,' added the Rector, with that sudden recollection of his vocation which was sometimes so absurd, and yet always so genuine.

Excepting upon Christmas and New Year Days, which were, of course, regarded by the young people at Fisherton as occasions when they had an immemorial right to make the lives of visitors a weariness to them, Mr. and Mrs. Wright did not cluster their olive branches round the family mahogany at the same hour when Colonel Leschelles solemnly partook of dinner.

In truth, he would not have come to them if they had to his dulled senses introduced the prattle of children, and expected him to listen to it.

The Colonel did not love any children. Elderly gentleman fond

of their own personal comfort, mental or physical, rarely are; and he certainly had in his creed no saving clause which exempted the juvenile Wrights from a place in his bad books.

As has before been hinted, these young people were not charming, save in the estimation of their parents; and Colonel Leschelles was not their parent of either sex, for which deliverance the misguided man thanked God.

If the truth must be told, as it ought always to be in fiction, Mr. Wright was secretly pleased by the consequences of his friend's idiosyncrasy.

Mr. Wright loved his children, but he also loved his dinner; and after a man has carved for a dozen, his own share of the repast is not usually eaten with much relish.

He was too wise a husband, however, to hint anything of this feeling to Selina, but it is a fact that the triangular meal eaten in company with Colonel Leschelles and Mrs. Wright was very grateful to the Rector. More especially as the Colonel, under pretence of having been ordered to drink the produce of one especial vineyard, provided his own wine—and more of it than he could have consumed himself had he staid at Fisherton for three months.

Mr. Wright candidly confessed he did like a glass of sound port, or a sip of thoroughly good dry sherry, but beyond these things he far preferred the Colonel's Madeira, which was stated, Heaven knows with what truth, to have been twice round the Cape.

The Madeira itself never spoke of its travels—on the principle, perhaps, that 'good wine needs no bush.'

Further, in the pop of a champagne cork there was something

which brought out all the hidden virtues of Mr. Wright's nature.

The way in which he spoke of his 'dear friend,' when the first glass had been swallowed and approved, might have converted a misanthrope; whilst the way in which he seconded the Colonel's hint that Mrs. Wright had no wine, and pressed a second bumper on Selina, with a little nod of the head, and a cunning, 'Now, now, my love; drink it up; it will do you good,' was simply indescribable.

'What!' he would exclaim, 'get into your head? Nonsense! I'll be bound your head is far too wise a one to let it do anything of the kind. You are tired out; that is what you are, and you want something to put new life into you. Come, don't put a slight upon our good friend's magnificent wine. You won't get anything like this in a hurry again—take my word for that, and I taste a good deal of what is called first-quality champagne when I am asked to dine at great men's tables.'

Apparently shocked by this barefaced flattery, Mrs. Wright would say, 'Hush, Dion; Colonel Leschelles is not accustomed to your Irish frankness.' To which Mr. Wright would reply:

'Ah, my dear, you'll never make an Englishman of me. I must say out my mind; and I don't think it much matters what I say before our kind friend here. He has known me too long not to understand me thoroughly.'

And indeed this was quite true. The Colonel did understand Mr. Wright thoroughly, and could have said pretty accurately what the Rector's pretty speeches were worth.

Nevertheless, he liked to stay with the Wrights. He liked being looked up to, and he liked being flattered. There are many people

who, without being aware of the fact, are of one mind with Colonel Leschelles on these matters.

'Don't you think, Dion,' said Mrs. Wright to her husband, a few days before that Christmas Eve of which this story is now treating, 'that Maria might as well dine with us while the Colonel is here? She is getting old enough to appear in company, and she would balance the table nicely.'

'I am afraid we mustn't risk it,' answered the Rector. 'In the first place, Colonel Leschelles might not like the change; in the next, we should be sowing seeds of disunion between Maria and her sister; and, in the third place, you can't have Maria without having Bella Miles, and five would be no number at all.'

'I could explain the matter to Bella,' remarked Mrs. Wright.

'I don't think you could,' was the reply. 'If we are to have a fourth person at dinner, that fourth should be Mr. Irwin's niece.'

Whereupon Mrs. Wright took refuge in her usual remark—'I suppose you know best, dear!'

'I am sure I do in this instance,' said the Rev. Dion valiantly.

There were times when he openly took precedence of his wife's intellect, and shook hands with himself without disguise in her presence. But he did not thus thwart Mrs. Wright very frequently. As a rule he deferred to Selina's superior judgment, and then took his own way, privately if possible, apologetically if necessary.

So it was settled that Maria should not dine with her elders; and the Colonel had therefore his repast in peace and quietness.

After dinner—that is to say, after the soup and the fish and all the other courses had come and gone—after dessert had been trifled with, and all the wines tried with

judicial slowness and calmness—after coffee had been served, and the Colonel had declared he never tasted such coffee out of France as that to be met with at Fisherton—Mr. Wright said:

'Should you like to step up and see the decorations in our church? The ladies are just putting the finishing touches to them. We shall show something out of the common to-morrow, I can assure you.'

'My dear Wright,' answered the Colonel, 'I have no doubt the decorations will be everything they ought to be in your church; but I would not leave your hospitable fireside to-night for all the wreaths, and crosses, and mottoes, and holly and laurel in Christendom.'

'Just as you like,' cheerfully agreed the Rector. 'But I must go my rounds. I must inspect my fair regiment. Each profession has its toils as well as its pleasures.'

'I know who would have commanded, had my regiment been composed of ladies,' remarked Colonel Leschelles. 'But don't delay duty on my account. I will have a chat with Mrs. Wright in your absence. I always like talking to Mrs. Wright.'

'And Mrs. Wright likes talking to you,' said the Rector, with all his accustomed heartiness. 'She is out of the way of congenial society here. As she says, from one month's end to another, not a soul calls with whom she can exchange an idea.'

With which compliment to the grasp of the Colonel's intellect, implied and understood, Mr. Wright went off to church, leaving his wife *tête-à-tête* with their visitor.

'Dion!' called Mrs. Wright after him, 'mind you bring the girls back with you. Maria has got a cold already, and we must not have any invalids in the house at Christmas time.'

'Well, my dear, that can only be as Heaven pleases,' answered the Rector; 'but I will bring them back with me, never fear.'

That, however, was precisely the thing he failed to do. Accompanied by his daughters, he returned in about an hour to the rectory, when he informed Mrs. Wright that Bella's uncle had called at the church and gone with her for a stroll by moonlight.

'I wonder if he will come here for supper,' said Selina, care on her brow and housewifely anxiety in her heart.

'I should not think so,' replied the Rector. 'He will want to catch the nine-o'clock train if he means to get back to town to-night; but, in any case, we can but give him the best we have in our larder. You may be quite sure Irwin is not the man to suspect us of want of hospitality.'

'He must be a very extraordinary man if he could do anything of the sort,' remarked Colonel Leschelles.

In return for which observation, Mrs. Wright cast upon him a grateful glance, and said softly, 'Thank you.'

Time passed on, but Miss Bella did not return. Nine o'clock came—a quarter past—half past—and still no Bella.

'I wonder where the girl can be,' marvelled Mr. Wright. 'Her uncle would never take her to London without letting us know.'

'Perhaps he is staying somewhere in the neighbourhood,' suggested Mrs. Wright.

'I think I will go up as far as the station?' said the Rector. 'The Colonel won't miss me while he is showing you the presents he has brought for the children.'

'Really, it is too bad of Mr. Irwin,' said Mrs. Wright, who had never forgiven that gentleman for not rising to the bait of re-

furnishing Bella's bedroom. 'He ought to know better than keep the girl out until this time of night.'

'We are all of us old enough to know better, Selina,' answered the Rector, taking his arm which he had just put into the sleeve of his top coat out of it again; 'and, after all, I don't see that there can be any use in my going to the station.' He must, as you say, be staying in the neighbourhood somewhere. He would never leave her to walk home alone.'

'I should be very sorry to answer for what Mr. Irwin might or might not do,' commented Mrs. Wright, seated before the drawing-room fire, and screening her face from the blaze with a great feather fan brought by an admiring *protégé* from foreign parts.

'I think I will go, too,' remarked the Rector in the hall, putting on his top-coat again.

'Ha! here they are at last,' he added delightedly, as a pattering on the gravel announced that someone was coming up the drive.

'Why, Bella, my dear,' he went on, flinging open the door and looking out incredulously into the night, 'where is your uncle? Is he not with you? Have you come home alone?'

'Oh, Mr. Wright, I hope you will not be displeased,' she began; 'but we walked farther than we intended, and he had only just time to catch the last train. He wanted to come home with me, but I did not know where he could stay for the night, and besides, he wished to go to London; so I told him I would run all the way home, but I did not; I came back slowly, and that is the reason why I am so late.'

'Gracious heavens, child! what is the matter?—what has happened?' asked Mr. Wright, noticing she could scarcely restrain

her tears, and that her face looked white and troubled. Dreadful visions of Mr. Irwin's bankruptcy, insolvency, and ruin were vouchsafed to the Rector as he led her into the drawing-room and closed the door. In imagination he read, 'A large failure is announced to-day in the City, that of Irwin and Son, die-sinkers, Eastcheap,' and dire fears assailed him of the stoppage of that bank, so lately discovered, from which he had hoped cheques would continue to flow as naturally as manna once fell from heaven.

For a minute Miss Miles, coming out of the faint moonlight into the drawing-room, which the dancing fire and many wax candles made brilliant, seemed too much blinded and frightened to speak. Then, recovering composure, and seeing two pairs of anxious eyes fixed on her, she said:

'There is nothing the matter—at least, there is, for old Mr. Irwin died yesterday. But it is not that,' she added, 'it was not that which made me foolish. Uncle and I were talking about long ago, and I could not help crying as I came home. And oh! may I go to bed, please?' she went on, addressing Mrs. Wright; 'I have a dreadful headache, and I do not want to see anybody.'

'Certainly, dear, go at once,' replied Mrs. Wright, kissing the girl with a sudden impulse of affection and pity, which caress Bella returned with interest.

'Good-night,' she said, turning to Mr. Wright, who stood by, relieved but astonished.

He opened the door for her to pass on, and laying his hand on her shoulder, answered her words by saying:

'Bless you, my child.'

Then he went back to Selina, and exclaimed twice with great solemnity:

'Poor old Mr. Irwin! dear—dear—dear!'

Meantime Miss Miles, stealing off to Mr. Wright's dressing-room, which had for the nonce been appropriated to her use, was encountered suddenly by Colonel Leschelles coming, laden with gifts, out of the blue-and-white apartment her skilful fingers had helped to embellish.

For a moment the light of the candle he carried fell full on her face, while he, standing still, made way for her to pass.

With a little timid half-curtsey and a 'Good-night, sir,' spoken, in the confusion of the moment, in French, she tripped nervously away along the passage, leaving the Colonel still standing looking after her in amazement, his candle held aloft, and his astonishment finding vent in a muttered exclamation:

'I have seen that girl before,' he thought, 'but where?'

CHAPTER XVIII.

WHAT MR. IRWIN CAME TO TELL.

WHEN, earlier on that same Christmas Eve, Mr. Irwin looked into Fisherton Church to ascertain if his niece were there, a very pretty sight met his eyes.

Gas had not then penetrated farther into Fisherton than the railway station, distant some mile and a half, and it was by the light of many candles that the ladies, young and old, who had undertaken the care of the decorations, were fastening up mottoes, twining wreaths round pillars, affixing lettered banners to the walls, were, in a word, engaged in putting the old building into gala attire.

Now, there is a certain picturesqueness about candlelight, which gas emulates in vain. The

long, deep shadows—the small spaces cleared out of utter darkness—the corners filled with blackness—the changing of figures from flesh and blood to unreal phantoms as they pass from the light into the shade—the roof seen indistinctly, and looking consequently twice as lofty as it is in reality—the uncertainty as to what is hidden behind the pillars, and a sense of wonderment concerning the chancel, looking so dim and far away in the gathering gloom—all these things go to make up an interior, the secrets and fancies composing which gas sweeps ruthlessly away.

I marvel now what has become of the imaginings which childhood—in the days when Fisherton Church had to trust to the candle-maker for evening illumination—was wont to conjure up out of the old tomb to the right of the chancel, on which, under a stone canopy, lay the figure of a knight clad in complete armour, or of that other monument surrounded by praying children, and surmounted by a score of fat-cheeked cherubs bearing the body of Dame Ursula Berton, resting on rocky clouds, straight away to heaven.

When last Christmastide the present generation of young ladies assembled to put the finishing strokes to their labours, I am afraid the old church, though doing much credit to their taste and skill, lost, by reason of flaring gaslights, most of its romance.

Youth, beauty, and grace are eternal, and yet as the fashion of the settings in which we behold them vary, so may those who have had their taste moulded in days gone down many and many a year ago into the grave of time, be pardoned if the conceits of a former age seem to them more lovely than the bald framing of this.

To the end of his life Mr. Irwin, at all events, will never forget Fisherton Church as he looked into it for the first and the last time by night; never forget the sweet scent of the flowers, and the faint, unfamiliar, almost sickening, odour of the evergreens, the flitting figures of the young girls now tripping away into darkness, now posing themselves unconsciously into some picturesque attitude; whilst all the time the gloom of the pointed arches refused to receive even a gleam of light, and the ancient pillars seemed to submit themselves unwillingly to the hands of the beautifiers.

Around the font, admiring the work of her deft white fingers, stood a group of matrons and elderly ladies, who were expressing in no measured terms their admiration of Miss Miles' taste and skill.

'Not a flower or leaf but Christmas roses in the whole thing, I declare!' one voluble mother remarked, as she reluctantly moved towards the door; 'and look at it! If you had showered down stars from the firmament on a green meadow, it could not be more like life itself.'

'Do you know whether Miss Miles is engaged?' asked a gentleman standing in the shadow at this juncture, addressing the speaker who had been uttering her admiration to no one in particular.

'Lawks, sir, how you did frighten me!' remarked the worthy woman. 'I made sure it was a ghost a-speaking. Miss Miles, sir, she have just a-finished that there font, and, though I says it, as perhaps shouldn't, being Fisherton bred and born, I don't think to-morrow will see such another font in all England. Did you want Miss Miles, sir?'

'Yes; if you could say to her.

without putting yourself to inconvenience, that her uncle is here, I should feel very much obliged.'

A moment after, his niece sprang forward to where he stood.

'I am so glad—so glad to see you, uncle! I did not think you would come before the end of the week. Come and look at my work. I did it all, every bit, myself.'

'I have seen it,' he answered. 'I have been looking at it and you for the last quarter of an hour.'

'And never spoke a word to me,' she pouted.

'There were plenty to speak and say pleasant things, my dear,' he said gravely and fondly; 'and I liked to listen to your praises. It makes me so happy to think I acted wisely in bringing you here.'

'I am sure you did,' she agreed. 'I have learnt a great deal at Fisherton—more, in some ways, than I could have done in twenty years at school. You are going to the rectory, of course?'

'No,' was the reply. 'I want to have a chat with you. It is a moonlight night, if not a very bright one—not like the moonlights we remember elsewhere. Let us have a walk.'

'I will just tell the girls where I am gone, in case Mr. Wright wants me, and be with you in a moment.' And through light and shade he watched her figure flitting up the aisle, and away to the reading-desk, where the Misses Wright received her communication with the most polite indifference.

Red Indians and our upper ten thousand have, it is said, one charming trait in common—that of possessing the faculty of seeming to be surprised at and interested in nothing. If this be, as we are credibly assured it is, the perfection of good-breeding, clergymen's children must have close affinity

to the *crème de la crème* of society and barbarism.

Personally, I have no more acquaintance with braves and their squaws than I have with dukes and duchesses; but it has been my privilege to mix pretty freely with the sons and daughters of men holding rank of some sort in the Church, and I can safely say I have seldom met one who could be prevailed upon to evince a human interest in the affairs of any living being who was not directly or indirectly connected with themselves, or their papa's parish, or their papa's prospects.

This is, of course, while they remain in the parental nest. The world, fortunately, possesses a potent recipe for eliminating spiritual and social conceit out of the first-born even of a bishop; and there comes a time when the greatest prig nurtured in a rural parish becomes not merely tolerable, but agreeable in his manners.

But there is a middle passage to be encountered before this delectable land, where children born in rectories and vicarages become amenable to the laws of ordinary society, is reached, and clerical children may be met on equal terms by those destitute of ecclesiastical position.

The young Wrights were embarked on that passage, and woe to the unfortunate traveller who chanced to be in the vessel with them.

To all intents and purposes, they were ensconced in the cabin, while all the rest of their world had been only able to pay steerage fares. It is nice, this, for the clerical offspring, while it lasts; but it is nice also for the laity to remember it cannot last for ever. At first Miss Miles had writhed under the contemptuous indifference of Mr. Wright's dear children to anything except themselves and their own belongings;

but time reconciles us to most things, and Maria's coolly-uttered 'very well,' in answer to her delighted communication, did not damp her spirits in the least.

'This is lovely!' she said to her uncle, clasping both hands round his arm as they left the church. 'Only think of our having such a good time all to ourselves!'

'I am afraid you will not think it so good a time, after all,' he answered; 'for I have something unpleasant to tell you.'

Instantly the smile left her lips, and the light faded out of her eyes.

'About—about—my father?' she faltered.

'No; not about him—at least, I have news of him. He is going to the diggings.'

'Does he speak of coming home?'

'No. He says he will never come home unless he can return a rich man, which is not very likely.'

'I do not know that,' said the girl faintly.

Then ensued silence for a few minutes, which Mr. Irwin broke by saying:

'My father-in-law is dead.'

'Dead!' she repeated. 'When? What did he die of?'

'A fit of passion,' was the answer, spoken coldly, and almost sullenly. 'We had a quarrel about ten days ago, and when he was in the middle of a bitter and unjust sentence he fell back insensible; and, though he lived for over a week, he never fully recovered consciousness.'

'How horrible! What a dreadful thing for you!'

'It would have been a dreadful thing for me if he had recovered consciousness,' replied Mr. Irwin. 'He would have left me, comparatively speaking, a beggar. I wish, Bella—I wish with all my heart—I could say I felt sorry

when I saw him lying dead. Had he lived, I must have left the firm, separated from my wife—that misfortune I could have survived, however—parted, for the time at least, from my children, and begun the world all over again.'

'Why, what happened?—what could have happened?' she inquired, shivering, though she was warmly clad, and the night not particularly cold.

'I will tell you,' he answered; 'in fact, I must tell you, for our interests are identical, and, besides, it is a relief to speak out to some one. Always I have been to a certain extent in my father-in-law's power, and occasionally he made me feel the fact. Still, on the whole, we got on pretty well together. He liked keeping the reins in his own hands, but he was liberal enough in pecuniary matters; and though he never let me forget that the money was his, still he did not grudge me an ample share of it.'

He paused for a moment, and then continued:

'Some short time since we had a dispute with one of our customers about an account. He wanted, as I considered, to evade a just claim, and I was, therefore, firm about the matter—firmer than I should otherwise have been about a larger amount.'

'Yes, uncle?' said his niece inquiringly.

'At last we threatened legal proceedings, and he then sent his attorney to our office to endeavour to effect some compromise.'

'My partner left the management of the affair to me, and I rejected all offers of arrangement. After the lawyer had called two or three times his manner suddenly changed. He dared me to bring any case into court; he threatened me; he said, with a cunning insolence, for which I could have struck him, "Those

who live in glass houses should not throw stones;" and when I asked him what he meant, he said, "I thought there was something familiar to me about you, spite of your beard and your Yankee twang; but I was not sure of the matter until the other day, when I happened to meet a lady coming up the stairs, whom I remembered perfectly. Come, you had better give up your point. You won't like going into court, I know, and being asked if you ever stood in the dock yourself. Put pride in your pocket, Mr. Irwin, and prove yourself as discreet as you have been fortunate."

'And what did you do, uncle?' she asked.

'I behaved like a simpleton. I told him to do his best or his worst. I said I was more resolved than ever to insist on our rights; and then I opened the door, and remarked that if he did not leave the office at once I would kick him out of it.'

'And he?' inquired the girl.

'He laughed in my face. He said I should perhaps sing to a different tune before many days were over; and then he ran downstairs, stopping at the first landing to make a mocking bow.'

'Uncle, who was the lady?' asked Miss Miles.

'Can't you guess, my child?' he said pityingly, and then went on speaking more rapidly: 'Yes; she found me out—traced me by some means. I warned her not to come to the office. I entreated her not to ruin me as she ruined her husband. I told her I would do anything—anything that lay in my power for her welfare—if she would only keep quiet, and let me have the chance of keeping that horrid past out of sight. She promised me faithfully to keep our relationship a secret, and then, because I could not go to see her the very day she wished, came

three times to the office—three times, I assure you, in as many hours.'

'She ought not to have done it; she ought to have considered you,' murmured his niece.

'She ought. I have done all I could for her; but she is just the same as ever. If she wants a thing, she thinks the world ought to stand still while she gets it. When I remonstrated with her on her imprudence, she laughed and said:

'Nobody will notice me. No one could recognise me;' and she would not even draw down her veil.'

'Why did she want to see you so particularly?' asked the girl.

'She wanted me to find her money to go to Australia.'

'But you will not do so! Oh! don't let her go there!' entreated his companion.

'I shall come to that part of my story presently,' said Mr. Irwin. 'Let me tell you what that precious lawyer did. He went to my father-in-law, and raked up all the old story; told how I had been connected with your father; told how he was transported, and how I had been taken into custody; explained how my sister had been acquitted, though no living being could doubt her complicity; said I had been obliged to leave the country, that I was no better than a thief, and that I was still the companion of thieves, with much more to the same effect. He, it appears, had been engaged in the case, and knew all about it.

'That same evening, when all the clerks but one had gone—thank God he did not go—Mr. Irwin came up to my private office and opened fire.

'First of all, he asked me if what he had heard was true. Had my brother-in-law been a common workman—had he been taken up for theft—had he been convicted—had my sister been charged

with him—had I myself been suspected of being an accomplice. To these questions I had to answer "Yes." I tried to explain, to soften, to make the best of a bad business—all in vain. I could not alter facts; and he broke out.

'He said I had come to him in a false character—under false pretences—that I had basely betrayed the confidence he reposed in me, and repaid his kindness by inveigling his daughter into forming an attachment for a mere adventurer—a common swindler. I thought he would exhaust his vehemence at last, so finally sat silent. This he mistook for defiance. "You think, I suppose," he said, "that I cannot sever my connection with you. If there is justice in England, I will have it. You shall not say I sent you off penniless, but you shall not have a halfpenny more than I choose to give. You may smile" (I had done nothing of the sort), "but I shall prove as good as my word. I shall make my will to-night, and tie up every farthing, so that you can never riot on my hard-earned money. I shall take steps for a separation between you and my daughter. I shall——"

"You need not trouble yourself to explain your intentions further," I broke in at this juncture. "I shall never make any demand upon you in the future. I shall never see you or your daughter again." And with that I was about to leave the office, when he broke into the most frightful paroxysm of rage imaginable.

"Don't go," he shouted. "Don't dare to go. I have not half done with you. I have not said a quarter I mean to say. I will send the police after you if you——"

'I shall never know what he imagined I was going to do,'

finished Mr. Irwin, in a broken and agitated voice, 'for at that moment he made a movement, as if trying to clutch the air, and fell back in a fit.

'I ran to him, and unfastened his cravat. I shouted for Tucker to come and stay with him while I ran for a doctor. I raced through the streets like a madman, and at last procured medical assistance in the person of a young surgeon.

'When he looked at him he shook his head. "You had better not try to move him, sir," he said. "Make up a bed here and give him a chance. I should like to meet a doctor upon the case. There may be some hope, but my own impression is he will never speak again."

'We did all we could for him. The doctor came—many doctors came, but all confirmed the surgeon's opinion. Everything money could buy was bought. Everything skill could suggest was tried. His daughter came, but fainted directly, and had to be sent away again. We had two nurses, and I myself seldom left him. On the eighth day he died.

'He never spoke another conscious word. He never made the threatened will. He died intestate, as I understand from his solicitors; and if that be the case, nothing can now affect my pecuniary position; but I am afraid I shall not be able to hold up my head in the City again.

'I met that horrid lawyer to-day, and he said, with a grin, "It is better to be horn lucky than rich; is it not, Mr. Walter Chappell Irwin? It is fortunate when refractory relations die just in the nick of time."

'Oh! uncle, uncle!' cried out Bella Miles, 'don't offend that man any more. Make terms with him. Do anything to make him keep quiet!'

(To be continued.)

RECOLLECTIONS OF AN OLD HABITUÉ.

THE COMÉDIE FRANÇAISE.

TWENTY-FIVE years ago, when the star of Rachel was still in the ascendant, and her genius invested the rugged majesty of Corneille and the tender elegies of Racine with a new and peculiar charm, the 'off-nights' of the Théâtre Français presented, as a general rule, a melancholy and disheartening spectacle. The audience, few in number and essentially *bourgeois* in character, consisted chiefly of the old *abonnés* in their respective stalls, keeping themselves awake by repeated applications to their snuff-boxes, and of Palais Royal and Rue Saint-Honoré tradesmen, who, with their wives and daughters, thinly peopled the balcony and upper boxes. The actors played listlessly and mechanically, the *claqueurs* applauded drowsily, and not unfrequently at the wrong moment, and the treasurer, contemptuously regarding the miserable pittance taken at the doors, brightened up as he thought of the next evening's overflowing receipts, when 'Phèdre' or 'Les Horaces' should once more recall the truant public, and he himself, a second Tom Tiddler, should be pleasantly occupied in 'counting out gold and silver.'

These were, in truth, evil days for a national theatre, when its prosperity depended on the powers of attraction—not to mention the caprices—of one artist, even though that artist were the inimitable 'Camille.' For, ready as that inconstant dame Fashion may be to adopt new devices, she is by no means equally prone to reinstate in her good graces once discarded favourites; so that, for many a long year, the Théâtre Français remained a desert four

nights at least in the week, on which occasions, ironically denominated 'les lendemains de Mdlle. Rachel,' the money-taker's office dwindled to almost a sinecure, and even free admissions went a begging.

After a while, however, people began to remember that certain individuals called Molière, Regnard, and Beaumarchais had in their day written some very tolerable comedies, and that Samson, Regnier, and Augustine Brohan could represent these comedies tolerably well; nay, some went so far as to hint that Scribe and Dumas might occasionally be seen with pleasure, and that Alfred de Musset was not altogether 'flat, stale, and unprofitable.' A very little suffices to make a mickle; 'les moutons de Panurge' are as abundant in the nineteenth century as they were in the days of Rabelais; and, little by little, the Comédie Française recovered its ancient prestige, and became what it now is, and ought ever to have been, the rendezvous of the best society, the popular and unrivalled temple of the national drama.

* * * * *

It is rather tantalising to glance at the bygone records of this theatre, every page of which recalls some illustrious name, some imperishable work of art, and to feel that the limits I have assigned to these papers forbid even a cursory allusion to them. It is hard to pass over unnoticed Adrienne Lecouvreur, Lekain, Clairon, Prévile, and I was about to add Talma, when I bethought me of a little anecdote related by Madame de Girardin, which will serve to wind up these prefatory remarks, and

enable me to plunge in *medias res* with an easier conscience. During a discussion in a literary *soirée* as to the respective merits of Talma and Lafon, the company, with one exception, opined in favour of the former, while their solitary opponent argued as strenuously in behalf of the latter, and concluded by asserting that Talma was very much overrated. 'Then,' cried one of his adversaries, 'you can't have seen him in Orestes.' 'No more I have.' 'Nor in Hamlet,' exclaimed another. 'Nor in Hamlet either.' 'Then, in what did you see him?' said a third. 'Well,' replied the partisan of Lafon, with a triumphant smile, 'I saw him in a hackney coach, and thought nothing of him.'

* * * * *

Sixteen years previous to my arrival in Paris, the modern Roscius had been consigned to his last home in Père-la-Chaise; but two of his most renowned contemporaries still survived, and both of these I had more than one opportunity of seeing; I allude to Mdlle. Georges and Mdlle. Mars. Mdlle. Georges, the once beautiful rival of Mdlle. Duchesnois, the favourite of emperors and kings, and subsequently the terrible representative of Marguerite de Bourgogne and Lucrece Borgia, had long since retired from the stage; but, owing to the extreme modicity of her resources, was compelled occasionally to solicit a benefit either at the Comédie Française or at a minor theatre. The chief attraction of these performances, the effect of which was heightened by the co-operation of the principal artists of the capital, was, naturally, the *beneficiaire* herself; and I well remember the strange feeling of interest and curiosity with which I awaited the rise of the curtain one evening at the Vaudeville, preparatory to her

appearance in the second act of 'Athalie.' She was then very infirm and enormously corpulent; but her eyes still flashed fire as of yore, and her voice, though at times tremulous from age, had lost but little of its original sonority. The delivery of the famous dream was horribly impressive, and in her interrogatory of Joas there was a latent subtlety of malice, both as regards intonation and facial expression, of which no description can convey the faintest idea. Some years later, I saw her at the Théâtre Français, in 'Rodogune,' and came to the conclusion that the modern school of French tragedy, with its cold correctness and measured declamation, can only be redeemed from utter insignificance by the genius of its interpreters, and that the traditional points and pauses so sedulously inculcated by Conservatoire professors are but sorry substitutes for the impulsive earnestness of a Georges, or the untutored energy of a Rachel.

My personal recollections of Mdlle. Mars are limited to two or three short pieces of her *répertoire*, comprising, among others, 'Le Manteau,' one of Andrieux's pleasantest and most ingenious productions. She was then nearly at the close of her long and glorious career, and still retained many of the peculiar qualities to which she owed the flattering title of 'the diamond of the Théâtre Français.' Her voice was the sweetest and most melodious I ever heard on the stage, and her accentuation so marvellously distinct that not a syllable she uttered escaped the ear. Her acting, if such perfect grace of look, tone, and manner could be called acting, was that of a well-bred lady in her drawing-room, free from the slightest tinge of conventionality, and stamped with that real elegance *de bonne*

compagnie so rarely met with even in the highest rank, and which, if not innate, can never be acquired. Alas! I little thought, while spell-bound beneath the charm exercised by this gifted creature over all who saw or heard her, that I should shortly after, a voluntary mourner, form one of the melancholy procession whose sad office it was, on March 26th, 1847, to escort her remains to their final resting-place in Père-la-Chaise.

Among the many tributes of sorrow called forth on this occasion, perhaps the most touching, from its simplicity, was the following *couplet*, referring to some alterations and embellishments recently completed at the Théâtre Français, and sung—who would have supposed it?—some months later in a *revue* of the Palais Royal:—

‘ Dans cette salle où maintenant l’or
brille,
Thalie en pleurs cherche dans son cha-
grin,
Cherche un sœur qui manque à sa fa-
mille,
Un diamant qui manque à son écrin !
Mars n’est plus là, pour nous donner
l’exemple,
Et le public se dit, tout attristé,
“ Qu’importe, hélas ! qu’on ait doré le
temple,
S’il est privé de sa divinité ! ” ’

It would appear that the atmosphere of the Comédie Française, like the fountain of Jouvence, possesses some especial time-defying properties, if we may judge from the perpetual youthfulness of some of its members. At the same period when I first saw Mlle. Mars, Mlle. Plessy was playing Valérie and La Camaraderie; and now, thirty years later, we find her still at her post, as supremely attractive in her favourite Marivaux as in the last new *proverbe* of Octave Feuillet, as coquettishly *mignarde* and silvery-toned as ever. Another

example of eternal juvenility was Mlle. Anaïs, who, when past fifty, not only acted, but looked the *ingénues* to the life, thereby justifying the remark of a celebrated critic, that ‘ the Graces have no age, and Mlle. Anaïs is one of the family.’

When Alfred de Vigny first produced his fine play of ‘ Chatterton,’ the part of Kitty Bell was justly considered one of the greatest triumphs of Madame Dorval, for whom it had been expressly written. On a subsequent revival of the piece, posterior to the death of that celebrated actress, the incompetency of her successor entirely paralysed the general effect, and, after a few tame and ill-attended performances, one of the best productions of the romantic school disappeared, probably for ever, from the *répertoire*. I was well acquainted with its author, and frequently visited him in his apartment in the Rue des Ecuries d’Artois. His wife was English, and every Wednesday a chosen circle of friends assembled in his little *salon*, where literary conversation was the order of the day. Alfred de Vigny was about the middle height, with small but piercing eyes, long, flowing hair, and a noble forehead, the very *beau idéal* of a poet. His manner had all the courteous politeness of the ancient *régime*, mingled with an affable *bonhomie* peculiar to himself. Occasionally he would read aloud to us some of his latest poems, but soon abandoned them for his idolized Lamartine; and I count among my most cherished ‘ pleasures of memory’ the privilege of having heard the melodious verse of ‘ Jocelyn’ from the lips of the author of ‘ Cinq Mars.’

A very necessary, though hardly sufficiently appreciated, appendage

to a theatre is a good 'old woman,' and this indispensable requisite, where Molière and Marivaux are concerned, is by no means easily met with. She must combine dignity of manner with a strong perception of the ludicrous; she must have tact enough to discriminate between the peculiarities of Madame Pernelle and those of Madame Argante, never descending to triviality, and yet always amusing. Such a *dûgène* (the best I ever saw after our own incomparable Mrs. Glover) was Madame Desmousseaux; and one of her most successful personations was Madame d'Aigueperse, in 'Le Mari à la Campagne.' The mention of this excellent comedy naturally brings me to its principal interpreter, and here, like Sir Colley Cowmeadow, in 'Master's Rival,' 'I want words to express myself.'

For what can I say of Regnier, the thorough and genuine artist, the accomplished scholar and gentleman, the friend of Dickens and Forster, and, I am proud to add, my own, that has not been repeated and endorsed by every admirer of his universally sympathetic talent? If ever a dramatic Proteus existed, it was Regnier, combining the raciest humour, the keenest wit, with the simplest and most heart-moving pathos (who can forget his Noel, in 'La Joie fait peur,' and Michonnet, in 'Adrienne Lecouvreur'!), passing 'from grave to gay, from lively to severe' as easily as he exchanged the fantastic livery of Scapin for the dainty vest and silver-fringed buttons of Figaro. No part was too small, too insignificant for him. His anxiety to ensure an irreproachable *ensemble* was such that I have known him undertake the trifling character of the valet Dubois, in the 'Misanthrope,' and in his one solitary scene fairly throw the superb Alceste himself into the

shade. He was, in fact, the life and soul of his theatre, devoting to its interests every hour of his time, every faculty of his intelligence, seeking no other reward for his labours than the honest consciousness of having done his duty, and thereby earning for himself, on finally closing his long and arduous career, the right of saying, as a parting hint to his successors—

'Ich habe
Das meinige gethan. Thun Sie das Ihre.'

* * * * *

'Le Mari à la Campagne' reminds me of a bright, sunny little creature, whose youth and beauty were charmingly attractive in this piece and many others, and who rejoiced in the pretty patronimic of Aimée Doze. She afterwards married Roger de Beauvoir, author of 'Le Chevalier de St. Georges,' and, turning her own thoughts to literature, produced a volume, entitled 'Les Confidences de Mdlle. Mars.' Why she gave it that name it is hard to say; for its pages, though pleasant and gossipy, contain but scant mention of the great actress; and it was remarked by a contemporary critic, that the only reproach he felt inclined to address to the writer was that she had kept the 'confidences' to herself, and left out Mdlle. Mars altogether.

* * * * *

I was present at the farewell benefits of Périer, Firmin, and Menjaud, three of the most popular members of this theatre under the Bourbon dynasty, and briefly subjoin my recollections of each. Périer was a consummate comedian of the old school, somewhat formal and antiquated in manner, but abounding in dry humour and epigrammatic point; Firmin, on the contrary, retained to the last that impassioned energy which

had served him so well in 'Henri III. et sa Cour'; and though short in stature, was neither wanting in dignity nor grace. As for Menjaud, he was one of the best level speakers I ever heard; his Clitandre, in 'Les Femmes Savantes,' was a perfect study, whether as regards the courtly ease of his manner, or the exquisite modulation of his delivery. But his *cheval de bataille*, on the whole, was 'Le Verre d'Eau,' in which quasi-historical but most entertaining comedy, Scribe himself, however punctilious and exacting he may have been, could scarcely have desired, or even imagined, a more elegant Bolingbroke than Menjaud, or a more imposing Duchess of Marlborough than Mdlle. Mante.

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Many years ago, looking over some Brussels newspapers, I came to the following comparison, which struck me as peculiarly happy. 'Bouffé, c'est le talent poussé à la dernière limite; Mdlle. Rachel commence où s'arrête Bouffe-au génie.' There, in one short sentence, is the real history of this extraordinary woman, the key to all her triumphs, the secret of that magnetic influence which few essayed to dispute and none could resist. From that eventful 1st of May, 1837, when, unknown and almost uneducated, she startled the public of the Gymnase by her strangely effective and unconventional conception of 'La Vendéenne,' to the last moments of her brilliant career, her qualities, nay, her very defects, bore that genuine impress of originality which constituted her greatest and most enduring charm. The former may have been perfected, the latter modified, by professional training, but Samson and Michelot could do no more, nor was more required of

them; the rest was in nature's hands, and they did well to leave it there.

Enough has been said, even in these pages, of Mdlle. Rachel, to render no further appreciation of her merits necessary. Those who have not seen her can barely glean from mere second-hand information a faint idea of what she was, and those who have will at once recognise how far even the most graphic description falls short of the reality. Let me, however, recommend to any who wish to know the *dernier mot* on the subject the elaborate and eloquent book of Jules Janin, entitled 'Rachel et la Tragédie,' a goodly volume, rich in poetical illustration, and written in that pleasant and sparkling style of which my lamented friend alone had the secret.

Off the stage, Rachel was lively, unaffected, and sociable; she had a keen sense of the humorous, and, like Talma, whose greatest ambition was to rival Brunet as Joerisse, fancied that her peculiar *forte* lay in comedy, and, notwithstanding her comparative failure as Marinette and Célimène, persisted in asserting that she was right and the public wrong.

'She was the strangest creature I ever met with,' said once to me the Duc de ——. 'I was in her *salon* the other evening, when two or three academicians came to pay her a visit. She received them with her most majestic air, and after a long conversation on literary and scientific topics, which she discussed with a gravity and *aplomb* worthy of Mdlle. de Scudéry, they took their leave. No sooner were they gone than she started from her chair, and began whirling about the room like a second St. Vitus, till she was fairly out of breath, when she sat down on the hearth-rug,

and devoured a plateful of brandy cherries. But that's nothing,' added he, 'compared to what happened not long ago at the theatre. She was electrifying the house in "*Phèdre*," and though I have seen her in it a dozen times, her scene with Hippolyte is so magnificent that I can never listen to it unmoved. At the end of the act I was talking to a friend in the lobby, when a note from her was given to me, simply two lines in pencil, saying that she felt exhausted, and requesting me on my way to the club to order something for her at Chevet's; and what do you think it was?' 'Perhaps Ostend oysters or a *perdreau aux truffes*,' said I. 'Not a bit of it, *mon cher*,' replied the Duc de —, 'Pickled salmon and *fromage de Chester*!'

Among the last creations of Mdlle. Rachel was *Rosemonde*, in the one-act tragedy, or rather drama so called, a production coldly received by the public and indifferently played by the actress, who was already suffering from the malady which eventually proved fatal to her. The final performance was so thinly attended, and the heroine herself so pale and wan as to suggest the following lines:

'Pourquoi nomme-t-on cette pièce *Rosemonde* ?

Je n'y vois pas de rose, je n'y vois pas de monde !'

The other members of the Félix family, Raphaël, Sara, Rebecca, Lia, and Dinah, have, without exception, successively tried their fortune on the stage. Of these, Rebecca, who died in 1854, at the early age of twenty-five, was the most promising; Mdlle. Lia Félix still enjoys a certain reputation as a boulevard actress, and her younger sister, Dinah, since the retirement of Augustine Brohan and Mdlle. Bonval, has become

one of the leading *soubrettes* of the Comédie Française.

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The three male representatives of tragedy during the reign of Mdlle. Rachel were Ligier, Beauvallet, and Guyon; the first will be remembered for his masterly personation of Louis XI., and his subsequent performance of Victor Séjour's '*Richard III.*' at the Porte St. Martin. In this latter piece, however, he was no longer the Ligier of Casimir Delavigne, but a fervent disciple of the ranting and roaring school, and blustered and bellowed so indefatigably as to cause a half-deafened spectator to exclaim: '*Il a dix louis par soirée, et il crie pour vingt-cinq!*'

It is no pleasant task for an actor of sterling talent to play night after night second fiddle to a popular star, and to content himself with a small percentage of the applause so liberally bestowed on his more favoured partner. Beauvallet deserved better treatment than this, and eventually obtained it; by dint of energy and perseverance he triumphed over the indifference of press and public, and forced even the most fanatical worshippers of Rachel to admit that the tragedies of Corneille are anything but a monologue, and that Rodrigue and Horace are as necessary to their satisfactory interpretation as *Chimène* and *Camille*.

I cannot say as much for Guyon, nor for Madame Mélingue, both importations from the Ambigu, and artists of unquestionable ability, but wholly unsuited to the Théâtre Français. Accustomed to the declamatory prose of Bouchardy and Anicet Bourgeois, and the feverish transports of a boulevard audience, unwilling or unable to imitate the classical sobriety

of tone and gesture of their new associates, and chilled by the comparative apathy of the critical *habitués*, they gradually lost confidence in their own powers, thereby verifying when too late the old saying,

'Tel brille au second rang qui s'éclipse au premier.'

* * * * *

If Melpomene, at least as far as her heroine was concerned, proudly held her own against all comers, Thalia was worthily and effectively represented by Samson and Provost. The former, author of the well-known comedies, '*La Belle Mère et le Gendre*,' and '*La Famille Poisson*,' and one of the founders of that noble institution, the Dramatic Artists' Association, had little in common with his illustrious namesake, his object being the preservation, not the destruction, of the temple, of which he himself was one of the soundest and most essential pillars. Despite the natural defects of a sharp, grating voice and a nasal twang, he not only delighted the multitude by the dry pungency of his humour, but gratified the connoisseur by the delicate finish of his style; his versatility was as conspicuous in the ancient as in the modern *répertoire*, and it would be hard to say whether his talent appeared to more advantage in Sganarelle or Quexada, in Monsieur Jourdain or the Marquis de la Seiglière.

Provost had neither the brilliant impetuosity of Regnier, nor the ease and polished sarcasm of Samson; but he was not the less an admirable comedian. The epithet usually applied to his acting was '*magistral*,' nor could any more appropriate term have been found to designate its particular merit. He had perhaps less influence over the masses than his two

fellow-artists, but there was a depth of observation in his conception of a character, and a frank dignity in his general bearing, that, added to his impressive and excellent delivery, rendered his performance of what are technically called '*les manteaux*,' not merely a rich intellectual treat, but a most enjoyable and profitable study. In private life, Provost was as majestic, as stately, in a word, as '*magistral*,' as on the stage; there was a gravity in his demeanour, and in his very walk during his afternoon stroll in the garden of the Palais Royal, which instinctively reminded one of Arnolphe in the '*Ecole des Femmes*'; and I fancy I see him now, beguiling the tedium of an *entracte* with his favourite game of chess, and solemnly pondering over a hazardous move at one of the tables in the *foyer*.

It is time, by-the-by, to introduce the reader to that commodious and aristocratic sanctum of the ordinary comedians of his Majesty—no matter who; a locality bearing but scant resemblance to anything we have witnessed in our peregrinations through the minor Parisian theatres. A *huissier*, his neck encircled with a silver chain, stands at the door, and inclines his head as we enter. We find ourselves in a spacious and lofty apartment, the walls of which are decorated with portraits of the most illustrious ornaments of the Comédie Française; a smaller room adjoining being devoted to similar reminiscences of the authors. There is a quiet repose about the place, and a genial though slightly ceremonious politeness in the manner and conversation of the *habitués*, that recall the traditional elegance of the eighteenth century, and we almost imagine ourselves transported to

the days when the gallant Fleury, with that exquisite courtesy for which he was so celebrated, gracefully handed Mdlle. Contat to the stage, and awaited the termination of her scene to escort her back to the *foyer*. We take advantage of the prevailing stillness to examine the pictorial treasures at our leisure, and one of the first to attract our attention is a charming portrait of Mdlle. Lange, that fascinating siren destined henceforth to be associated in our memories with M. Lecocq and his melodious 'Fille de Madame Angot.'

I think it is Arsène Houssaye who relates an anecdote of her which is worth preserving. She was in the full splendour of her beauty, and at the zenith of her dramatic reputation, when a young man, newly arrived in Paris from Brussels, fell desperately in love with her, and despatched an eloquent missive to his father, who appears to have been at once banker and coach-builder, imploring his consent to their union. M. Simons, for such was his name, alarmed at the prospect of having an actress for daughter-in-law, did what most fathers would have done under the circumstances; he left his bank and carriages to take care of themselves, and started for Paris as rapidly as post-horses would carry him. On his arrival he found the lovers together, and, struck with the lady's charms, felt almost inclined to pardon the misdemeanour of M. Simons, junior; when the trio were suddenly startled by the abrupt entrance of the fair damsel's inseparable friend and companion, likewise a *pensionnaire* of the Théâtre Français, Mdlle. Julie Candeille. Love at first sight, apparently, is not such a myth as some people would have us believe; for, strange as it may seem,

before another hour had elapsed, M. Simons the elder (who was luckily a widower) not only consented to his son's marriage with Mdlle. Lange, but himself proposed to and was accepted by Mdlle. Candeille!

One of the principal modern ornaments of the *foyer* is a large painting by Geffroy, the eminent comedian and original creator of Marat in Ponsard's 'Charlotte Corday,' representing the leading members of the company; the numerous personages are grouped with taste and effect, and the likenesses are for the most part striking, especially those of Monrose, Firmin, and Mdlle. Mars.

The mention of 'Charlotte Corday' reminds one of the actress who, on Mdlle. Rachel's refusal to play the heroine, boldly stepped forward to undertake the part, and failed signally therein. When I first saw Mdlle. Judith, she was a promising young *débutante* at the Folies Dramatiques, black-eyed, cherry-lipped, in short, remarkably handsome, and especially attractive in a piece called 'Les Premières Amours du Diable.' From thence to the Variétés was a mere step, but in the right direction, and we find her soon after soliciting and obtaining the desired *entrée* to the Rue Richelieu. Once there, she did her best to improve her position, and, taking for her motto, 'qui ne risque rien n'a rien,' or, in other words, 'nothing venture nothing have,' grasped only too eagerly the straw held out to her, and, less fortunate than Sadak, sank together with M. Ponsard's tragedy in the waters of oblivion.

Mdlle. Judith had the reputation of being both satirical and charitable. I do not guarantee the exactness of what follows, but 'tell the tale as it was told to me.' Some act of liberality on her part

having come to the ear of one of her admirers, he warmly commended her for it, and slyly added that no one would accuse Mdle. Rachel of anything similar: to which her reply is reported to have been: 'C'est possible, car moi je suis Juive, tandis que Rachel est Juif.'

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The name of Brohan in dramatic circles has long been synonymous with wit, piquancy, and grace; the mother, Madame Suzanne Brohan, although restricted in her day to the narrow arena of a vaudeville theatre, still retains a cherished place in the memory of old playgoers as a type of elegance and *finesse*; and no one who has seen Augustine and Madeleine will, I think, dispute their claim to hereditary distinction. The latter—for I cannot part with Augustine just yet—is, with the exception of Madame Plessy, the sole remaining representative of the traditional *grande coquette*. The years which have elapsed since she first trod the stage in 'Les Contes de la Reine de Navarre' have refined and matured her talent, and endowed her with that ease and self-possession which experience and incessant study alone can give. She may not quite realise our ideal of Elmire and Célimène; those wonderful conceptions of the *grand siècle* may still be beyond her grasp; but she has more strings than one to her bow, and if she occasionally disappoints us in Molière, makes ample amends for it by invariably enchanting us in Alfred de Musset.

Her sister was, or is—for, though ostensibly on the retired list, she has never, to my knowledge, formally taken leave of the theatre—*

the very best *soubrette* that I remember having seen, or even heard of, at least in the present century. Respecting Madeleine Béjart and Mdle. Beauval, the original creators of Marinette and Nicole, we have little reliable information; Mdle. Dangeville and (in her one character of Suzanne) Mdle. Contat may have equalled, perhaps surpassed her; but, setting these aside, I do not believe that the Comédie Française has possessed, in this particular line, an actress in any way comparable to Augustine Brohan as a *servante* of Molière or a *soubrette* of Marivaux (for they must not be confounded); as the Suzanne of Beaumarchais, or the Madame de Prie of Alexandre Dumas she stands alone; her extraordinary versatility combines every quality necessary to the efficient interpretation of the most opposite individualities; so that each successive assumption, 'de plus fort en plus fort, comme chez Nicolet,' appears to the delighted spectator more faultless, more nearly perfect than its predecessor. The most pointed wit, the sauciest humour, the most infectious gaiety, the archest and most bewitching coquetry, every natural or acquired attribute that can charm and fascinate the enraptured listener, she has them all at her finger's end, in every twinkle of her eye, in every pout of her lip, in every echo of her merry laugh! She can write, ay, and has done so more than once, as pretty a *pro-verbe* as Octave Feuillet himself; her *bons mots* would fill a volume; and in repartee—I was about to say she is matchless—but of that, gentle reader, you shall judge for yourself.

One evening she was sitting in the *foyer*, recruiting herself with a cup of *consommé*, and surrounded, as usual, by a levee of admirers, among whom was Des-

* According to M. Georges d'Heilly, her retirement took place in 1868.

noyers, then stage-manager of the Théâtre Français. 'Augustine,' said he, 'you have always an answer for everything, but I intend to puzzle you. I will give you a sentence, in which I will introduce the name of a town. You are to reply in one word, which must not only be *à propos* to what I say, but must also signify a city or town, in France or out of it. I am not particular. Ça va-t-il ?'

'Ça va,' said the actress.

'Bien,' pursued the régisseur. 'Commençons. Il paraît que tu aimes le bouillon ?'

'Elbeuf' (et l'bœuf), replied Augustine, without moving a muscle.

'Bravo!' cried the delighted circle.

Desnoyers looked rather crest-fallen, but, recovering himself, continued in a pathetic tone, 'Si tu me joues de ces *tours-là*, j'en mourrai!'

This time Augustine rose from her seat, stared him full in the face, and exclaimed with perfectly annihilating emphasis, 'Péris, gueux!' (Périgueux)!

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When Alfred de Musset's charming 'Caprice' was first produced on the stage, the part of Madame de Léry found an inimitable representative in Madame Allan. This talented artist, whose name, like Boileau's, was Despréaux, had been for some years the mainstay of the French theatre at St. Petersburg, and had only recently returned to her native country. She was neither young nor pretty, and had an ultra-provincial taste in dress which would have driven Worth and Madame Ode into fits; but there was such a quiet elegance and ladylike assurance in her address and manner that the most hypercritical of her female spectators — incredible though it

may seem — actually forgot her barbaric assortment of colours in their enjoyment of her graceful and sympathetic acting. She subsequently played Madame Des Aubiers in 'La Joie Fait Peur' with an impressive pathos and a mute eloquence of look and gesture far beyond the reach of her ablest successors, even including Madame Vestris, with whom it was a favourite part. In the hands of the present possessor, Madame Guyon, the afflicted mother has become a mere prosaic *bourgeoise*, exciting compassion simply on account of her supposed bereavement, but no longer invested with that all-absorbing interest which the genius of Madame Allan rendered so inexpressibly touching.

Certainly the post of *sociétaire* at the Théâtre Français, assuring as it does a fair share of the profits and a comfortable retiring pension, is a remarkably snug berth; but when I look back to bygone days, and contrast Emilie Guyon's boulevard popularity with the steady, jog-trot respectability of her position in 1874, the 'otium cum dignitate' of the latter loses much of its prestige, and, in her case at least, only needs a distinctive badge to complete its identification with the 'Invalides.'

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We were talking just now of Alfred de Musset; but where would he be, dramatically speaking, without Delaunay? The charm of 'Les Caprices de Marianne' and 'On ne Badine pas avec l'Amour' lies as much in the interpretation as in the exquisite beauty of the language. These delicate love-poems, so seductive to the imagination of a reader, are only possible on the stage when their ideal personages are embodied by actors physically and intellectually capable of appreciating and

imparting to those around them each delicate touch, each graceful fancy; and such an actor is Delaunay. A *jeune premier* of his stamp is as rare as a tenor like Mario. No theatre, from the Comédie Française down to the smallest nomadic company exhibiting in a barn, is without its young lover; and if the quality were only proportionate to the quantity, one more or less would be no very serious consideration; but, as things are, I confess that I regard the eventual retirement of Delaunay as an irreparable artistic calamity, and shudder at the thought of a *Perdican* fashioned by some aspiring laureate after the traditions of the Conservatoire!

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It is, I believe, an undeniable truth that a pretty face is always welcome; therefore, according to Cocker, three pretty faces must be trebly acceptable; and this may in some degree account for the rapid advance made in public favour by Mdlles. Fix, Dubois, and Favart. It would be unfair, however, to attribute their success solely to their good looks; nor would either of them have been justified in warbling 'My face is my fortune,' for a more accomplished trio in one theatre and at the same time I have never beheld. Mdlle. Delphine Fix, the most attractive of the three, was a dark-eyed, daintily-shaped Jewess, with the brightest of smiles and a soft, musical voice—in a word, a very captivating little creature to look at or to listen to. The peculiar feature of her acting was its simplicity; her *ingénues* were modest, unaffected, and natural; and if Beaumarchais had seen her play Chérubin, he would probably have modified, if not altogether forgotten, his ancient enthusiasm for Mdlle. Olivier. The last time

I ever saw this really charming actress, shortly before her death, was in 'Le Bonhomme Jadis,' a delicious one-act gem by Henry Mürger; the two remaining personages were represented by Provost and Delaunay; and, tax my memory as I will, I do not remember in the whole course of my theatrical experience having witnessed a more admirable *ensemble*.

That blonde and blue-eyed fairy, Mdlle. Emilie Dubois, when I first knew her, was extremely young, and appeared even younger than she actually was, owing to her child-like face and infantine voice. Her features were small and delicate, and she was a 'winsome wee thing.' Her Antoinette in Léon Laya's clever comedy, 'Les Jeunes Gens,' one of her earliest and best attempts, enchanted the audience, and so gratified the author that, in his preface to the published play, after a flattering mention of the *dramatis personæ*, he reserved her name until the last; not, as he says, on account of her being the youngest, but in order that so graceful and charming a *souvenir* might ever remain fresh in his memory.

I am no partisan of the solitary star system lately introduced by the managers of the French theatre in London, considering it as detrimental to the artists engaged as it undoubtedly is to the regular company. The former, accustomed to the perfection of a Parisian *ensemble*, and to the absence of all prohibitions or curtailments of their *répertoire*, not only find themselves paralysed by the unavoidable incompetency of their supporters, but, from the limited range of authorised characters, are compelled, as in the case of Mdlle. Favart, to appear in parts wholly unsuited to them: the latter, doomed by turns to co-operate in comedy, vaudeville, farce, and even drama,

become, necessarily, 'Jacks of all trades, and masters of none.' The selection of 'Le Sphinx' as the *rôle de début* of Mdlle. Favart was, if not financially, at any rate artistically, a fatal mistake; five and twenty years' hard work at the Comédie Française ought to have been taken into account before risking her well-earned reputation in a needless and unprofitable venture. Had she been allowed to play 'Le Supplice d'une Femme,' in which her touching pathos and sterling dramatic qualities are so truly and deservedly effective, the result might have been different; as it is, her recent engagement at the Princess's Theatre can only be classed with the other two decided failures of the year—those of Madame Marie Laurent and Madame Pasca.

I am aware that no rule is without its exception, and that the cordial and hearty welcome lately accorded to Got may be quoted against me; but one swallow makes no summer, and I do not knock under for 'a' that.' A comedian of his value, unrivalled since the retirement of Regnier, like Guzman, 'ne connaît pas d'obstacles;' nor, indeed, had he any unusual ones to encounter; Mercadet and M. Poirier having nothing to fear from censorial susceptibility, and the 'stock' actors (to their credit be it spoken) proving tolerably equal to the occasion. Besides, when Got is on the stage, no one has eyes or ears but for him; every word, every look, even the slightest particle of his marvellous by-play, is worth noting and remembering; we feel ourselves at once in the presence of a master-spirit possessing all the secrets of his art, and lavishing on us the rare treasures of wit, humour, and thoughtful observation with which

his own intelligence and a profound study of human nature have so richly endowed him. I have had by me for years an interesting memorial of this great artist, in the shape of a 'pensée fugitive,' probably long since forgotten by the writer, but carefully preserved and cherished by its grateful recipient. Its brevity will not weary my readers, and, if I mistake not, its modesty will charm them; so, 'faith, I'll prent it.'

'Nous autres comédiens—n'avons à nous que le moment qui passe, et ne vivons un temps que pour l'oreille et les yeux.

' EDMOND GOT.

' Février, 1853.'

It is something for the Théâtre Français to have in reserve for possible contingencies a worthy successor to Got in the person of Coquelin, a young actor of whom it may be truly said that 'Ses premiers essais furent des coups de maître.' A livelier Figaro, a wittier Scapin, a more jovial Gros-René could not be desired; and those who have heard him recite 'La Grève des Forgerons' will acquit him of any want of intense dramatic feeling and sensibility. His brother, Coquelin *cadet*, is likewise a member of the company, but of minor note; wherefore we will respect his incognito, bearing in mind the advice of a worldly dowager (was it not Lady Cork?) to a youthful *débutante*: 'Tant qu'il y aura des *ainés*, ma chère, ne faites jamais attention aux *cadets*' (pronounced, if report belie not her ladyship, *caddies*).

A few words must suffice to square accounts with the remainder of the *troupe*, Bressant, Febvre, and Mdlle. Nathalie having been mentioned elsewhere. It is, I own, discourteous and unjust

to pass over unnoticed such time-honoured veterans as Maubant, Talbot, and Kime, and such fascinating recruits as Mdlle. Sara Bernhardt, Mdlle. Lloyd, and the fair-haired Mdlle. Reichenberg; but I have metal more attractive in prospect. Like the Wandering Jew, and Mynheer von Clam, the gentleman with the cork leg, I am hurried on in spite of myself. Mdlle. Croizette beckons, and I must perforce obey. 'À tout Sphinx tout honneur!'

When this very prepossessing young lady first appeared as Queen Anne, in 'Le Verre d'Eau' (by-the-by, why *will* Bolingbroke and every one else invariably convert Masham into *Meshe*?), one could see at a glance, by the excellence of her delivery and the quiet ease of her manner, that

she was a pupil of Regnier. The part is an arduous stumbling-block for a beginner, requiring great self-possession and sobriety of style; but before the conclusion of the second act she had secured and monopolised the attention of her audience, and the rest was all plain sailing. Since then her progress has been uncontested and unchecked; her recent triumph in sensational effect has opened to her versatile talent a new field for its display; and should any doubt arise as to the degree of future eminence to which she is likely to attain, we have only to look at her bright and intelligent countenance; and, Sphinx though she be, I scarcely think that an Œdipus will be needed to solve the riddle!

C. H.



GHENT AND THE BÉGUINAGE.

IN the old times, which seem now a golden age, before the Franco-German war had burst, tempest-like, over the gayest land in Europe, the notion that some monument of antiquity, hoary with age and venerable associations, had passed out of the order of the things that are—had succumbed to the relentless hand of time, or fallen a victim to an unexpected disaster, hurricane or flame, was altogether an unusual and strange sensation. We read of smoking villages, of ruined castles, and sacked cities only in our history books, and, like good boys, blessed our stars, or other ruling providence, that we lived in better times. That shells should threaten the towers and domes of a great capital not a day's journey from our own homes hardly entered into the range of possibilities; at least with such men of peace as are not diplomatically inspired, and cannot read the stars of political intrigue. We read our Reuter over our morning tea and toast, innocent of such terrors. Only the enthusiastic and the artistic, the men with an eye for the picturesque, and a heart for the sentimental or a soul for the sublime—or, better still, a retentive memory and a note-book for all three—told you, with bated breath and in despairing accents, that the parochial authorities of Little Pedlington had voted the removal of the ancient parochial pump, which he called a 'conduit,' and about which he had read a paper at the local Archaeological Society, and anent which he had written several letters to 'Notes and Queries.' In vain he pleaded the interest attaching to the venerable relic; in vain he drew attention to its curious and

instructive history, and the legends connected with it. After all, it went, and more tears were shed over that act of vandalism than drops of water had fallen from its battered old leaden spout for many long years gone.

Just now I spoke of Paris. Well, over there, where the sun seems to be always shining, and the fountains playing, and the little children frisk and gambol in the gay Tuileries gardens, as if no great, ugly, scorched ruin were frowning down on them, and yet where more silly and wicked things are done in a week—and forgotten—than a century of anarchy and misrule could produce elsewhere, there are ugly gaps in the long, stately lines of buildings now. But in the old days of the Second Empire, when Haussman was king, it really needed but the magical word 'Improvements,' and whole streets and quarters were spirited away. Think of that grand Rue de Rivoli clearing away in its course, like a great shining river, all those purlieus which arrested its progress where you reach St. Antoine! The Paris of our sires, and of their fathers before them, the Paris of Eugène Sue and Gavarni, the Paris of the Barricades was vanishing. The dens and rookeries were melting away like the realms of darkness before the palace of the good fairy in the pantomime. There were to be no more street rows, no more driving the people back by grapeshot and bayonet, no more barricades. Paris was to 'give up sack, and live cleanly;' and her citizens were to rejoice in a state of things wherein, to use the neat expression of Policeman X, 'there ain't no Coo-de-tars.'

Such for the nonce was the programme of King Haussman, and one trembled to think whither his inevitable boulevard would next direct its course. Should we learn next day that there was to be a 'Boulevard du Cité,' and that when next we went on our Continental trip we should look in vain for the glittering *girouette* of the Ste. Chapelle, and find the venerable cathedral replaced by a 'square,' appropriately named 'du Métropole'?

At home we manage much the same. Apropos of 'squares,' think of the howling wilderness there used to be which a bold Baron has turned into a pretty garden; and then its frightful and sole tenant, whom not even the threats of Don Juan, nor all Mozart's music to boot, would have prevailed on any Leporello to ask to supper! It made me sad, that dreadful place, and I used to miss the dear old Globe. That, too, is gone, the wonder and joy of one's childhood, which made our geographical studies so delightfully incomprehensible, as set me, for one, wondering how funny it would be if the world were turned inside out, and we lived within, instead of on its outer surface. How attached we get even to ugly and repulsive things! I remember quite well, in my early days, when the only exit southward from town was the London Bridge Terminus, that one of the joys of the long journey in the luggage-laden cab, on the occasion of the annual family exodus to the seaside, from the West End, were certain objects—now, alas! gone for ever. What a pleasant journey it used to be, that dreary drive. The Marble Arch, all white and glittering, and ugly, black, frowning Newgate; then there was Middle Row, where the road grew narrow, and the funny old gabled houses, and the steep hill; then

there was the great dome of St. Paul's, with its shining cross; and then the Exchange and the gold grasshopper. How changed it all looks now, how stupid, and common, and downright ugly, as seen from the top of a 'bus as we go Citywards in the morning.

And old Temple Bar is going, and Northumberland House has become, like my old haunted houses, a thing of the past. But it is indeed sad to learn that one of the prettiest, brightest, quaintest things in Europe is doomed to destruction—something that few of us who have gone abroad have failed to visit, and from which still fewer had failed to bear away the sunniest recollections—memories that had a charm like the faint, sweet perfume of the woods in autumn, when the leaves had fallen, or like the melody of an old-world song.

The old Grand Béguinage is no more! The quiet, happy birds that built and nestled there have flown, and their old nests are now desolate and deserted. Dear old Grand Béguinage! If ever on this earth there seemed to be a place which fittingly might be called 'a home of ancient peace,' surely it was there. And yet it was set down, six centuries ago and more, in the heart of one of the most populous and busy towns in Europe. Few, indeed, have seen so many battles and known so many revolutions as Ghent. Over and over again have a besieging force lain around it; over and over again have victorious troops poured through the breaches of her walls or thundered in at her gates; over and over again have pillage, and sack, and slaughter wrecked her buildings and desolated her people; and yet the Béguinage has stood all through it, like the Pyramids of Egypt, which alone—so Eastern legends tell—of all the works of

man survived the universal deluge. Nor were these the only opposing influences against which this extraordinary institution, one of many in Belgium, had to contend. Early in its history its denizens were suspected, I know not with what amount of truth, of sympathy with a certain mysticism, not wholly unlike the 'spiritualism' of our own time, and which, early in the fourteenth century, had begun to infect the German theological schools. The sects that had their rise in a grotesque exaggeration of piety, either in ethics or practice, at that point where devotion degenerates into superstition, and enthusiasm becomes fanaticism, are sufficiently well known to need no description here. Foremost among them are, of course, the Flagellants, and the Brethren of the Free Spirit, or of 'Free Love.' Whether these worthies professed the agreeable doctrines with which Miss Woodhull has made us familiar I know not; but if they did, I am sure it was as well they were so unpopular. Be that as it may, the poor Béguines, albeit they were lone women, with never a Beecher to their Tilton, got a bad name, as having adopted these objectionable views; and in 1811 a thunderbolt fell in the midst of their quiet little world, in the shape of what is known as the Clementine Constitution of the Council of Vienna. One may fancy how shocked and frightened all the poor little ladies were at this unpleasant occurrence, and how the bigwigs and bishops improved the occasion to harry and vex them; and how the furred and tippeted canons and the university dons from Louvain became extraordinarily orthodox, with one eye very wide awake on Naboth's vineyard. But the Béguines picked up courage, and they wrote off to the Pope, John XXII., and he, like a

good man and a father, came to their rescue, and gave them leave to choose a rule of life which none dare assail. So on that score they had peace, and were let alone all through the stormy history of the city.

Even when the Calvinists were sacking the churches, and well-nigh two centuries later, when the great English general entered Ghent at the head of the army of a Protestant state, they continued to live in peace. The cold, treacherous policy of Joseph II. of Austria could not dislodge them; no, nor yet the storm of the great French Revolution, which came here early. Béguines were walking to and fro in the quiet streets of their little citadel, and going placidly through the tranquil routine of their daily life, much the same then as it is nowadays, under the *régime* which made religion a crime, and at headquarters got the ill-sounding name of the 'Reign of Terror,' which will probably stick to it for a very long time. And even when in its turn Protestant Holland held sway in Ghent, the Dutch government not only left the Béguines unmolested, but protected and patronised them.

To what sinister influence, then, has it at last succumbed? Awhile ago I spoke of Haussman and the ruthless demands of his 'city improvement' schemes. After all these hairbreadth escapes, and weathering six centuries of storm, the old Grand Béguinage has fallen a victim to the same vulgar agency which might doom a row of stucco villas to destruction, or compass the demolition of a tumble-down tavern, for the sake of the 'eligible building land' on which they stood. Have we not seen, one after another, poor Sir Christopher Wren's queer old City churches sold by the stern demand of 'City improvements'? To me, the only wonder

is that the old Grand Béguinage lasted long enough for the present writer to chronicle with regret and veneration its 'decline and fall.'

The city of Ghent has ever been, as I have said, a turbulent city. Part of her success and interest lies in this very circumstance, and in past times hardly a century passed without her being the prey of contending forces. Past and present are met in her streets; the history of well-nigh every great nation in Europe, as it passes over the path of time, has halted here. The fruits of labour and the triumphs of art, no less than the spoils of war, have helped to build her up; while nature with a lavish hand has scattered benedictions on the fertile plains that lie around her walls.

As we approach the city through the tree-girt fields that skirt the iron road, and its tall gabled houses, and beyond these the towers and spires of its halls and churches, rise to view, with here and there a tall, waving poplar or shady lime tree to vary the picturesque prospect; as we first catch a glimpse of a factory chimney or two, which tell of present industry, and the whirr of its factories and the busy hum of labour greet our ear in pleasant harmony with the gay carillon of the bells aloft; as we enter its populous streets, each with its history and varied associations, it is not easy to realise that this is the city of the Van Artaveldtes, or to recognise in its peaceful and industrious inhabitants the descendants of the terrible 'Chaperons-Blancs.' Every one who has been to Ghent knows the little square of Ste. Pharaïlde. The church which gave the place its name has long since passed away, but there is the old Marché aux Poissons with Quelliüs' fantastic water-god above the entrance, and

facing it the frowning, gloomy old gateway of the Oudeburg of the St. Graaven-steen, founded by mighty Baudouin 'Bras de Fer' a thousand years and more ago. Here it was, and all through the narrow, winding streets as far as the Marché de Vendredi, where I suppose they sold fast-day fare, that, on the 2nd of May, 1348, that terrible battle began which lasted three days and made Jacques van Artaveldte lord of Ghent. He was a great man, that doughty brewer; and in the shortlived exercise of his power he contrived to do great things, and, among others, concluded a treaty of commerce with the king of England. But his fickle fellow-citizens soon wearied of his rule, and in less than two months' time the great Ruwaert was slain on his own threshold.

Then there is the old cathedral, a wonderful and glorious place, and a perfect treasure-house of art. All its echoes are like dirges, and the glittering shadows in its aisles like ghosts. It is not like the glorious churches of Italy, where cherub faces smile on you from golden clouds, and all the air is bright and sunny, and shining with coloured marbles, and paintings, and soft hangings. Nor yet is it like the old churches at home, sad and soothing, like the grave of something we loved, departed and dead. Old St. Bavon's is melancholy, and its memories are depressing; its walls have seen bitter strife, for Ghent did not escape the storms of the crisis in the sixteenth century. That most dire of scourges, whose vengeance is a bitter irony, 'religious' warfare, raged here pitilessly. Of all the most horrid, unnatural things in this world, surely it is strife in God's House. Human nature at its worst might well be spared the satire of such a

possibility. Those solemn saints, the family portraits in this house of the poor man, which we see through the carved screens in the musty old chapels, how looked they on at those sad, sorry scenes? The iron tongues of the bells no longer utter summons to peaceful worshippers, but clamour angrily in half-protesting, half-complaining tones. Through the painted windows no longer gleams the light of altar tapers kindled for solemn rite; the faces of the saints therein are all aglow with wrathful fire. The solemn organs are hushed, pike and hammer thunder at the oaken doors. Through the open portals a wild mob of pillagers pours into the vast echoing nave; its solemn stillness is broken by rude jest and fierce shout. Hatchet and pick ring on the fretted stone, and altar and shrine are laid low. Aumbry and coffer are rifled, and their precious treasures scattered to the winds.

Such are the memories of St. Bavon's Cathedral. Let us hurry out of its gloomy aisles into the bright, merry street. Up aloft in the belfry, where the golden dragon gleams above his nest, 'Roland' is chiming merrily 'Er ist victorie in het landt.' All through these streets we go with that sound of victory and strife echoing in our ears. Here is the Place d'Armes. It is pleasant to wander here on a summer's night under the linden-trees, whose tender leaves, as the soft evening breeze tenderly kisses them and whispers to them, breathe out their sweet perfume. All around in the twilight we see the mellow glimmer of lighted chambers, and across the perfume-laden air comes faintly the sound of sweet music. Surely here is peace; but what says the pale moon, that looks quite tearfully, we might fancy, out of her aureole

of clouds on the sad place? Here it was, one November night in the year 1789, the principles that bear the name of that era were stamped in blood. Four days that terrible battle lasted, and the gutters ran with the best and bravest blood in Ghent. And so it is that, turn where I will in this quaint, wonderful old city, all its memories seem sad and terrible, and then there rises before my mind the shadow of her greatest citizen and the most unfortunate of her rulers. One looks in vain for the spot where that wondrous career began; it has long since passed away. Here in Ghent it commenced, on the 25th of February, in the year of our Lord 1500. It was a life marked by great victories, by singular prowess of arms, by a vast extent of power, by such success and grand good fortune as seldom fall to the lot of one man to enjoy. Seldom have so many crowns, the symbols of power over flourishing kingdoms, rested on one head. It was a brilliant and glorious career, one of those which stand alone in history, yet marked withal by great sorrow, embittered by disappointed ambition, and tainted with chagrin and remorse. None but the great heart which has compassed such triumphs could have weighed to the full the bitterness of such reverses, and it did not even then break, as one might have deemed it would, when all the old world was dead around it, and the newer social order was rising out of the chaos full of a young, fresh, and vigorous life.

Charles V. was wont to say that Paris would go into his glove. The great monarch's 'mot' may perhaps excuse one on my part when I say that he had with his native town, as the saying is, his hands full. Yet he loved Ghent dearly, and his native land. His

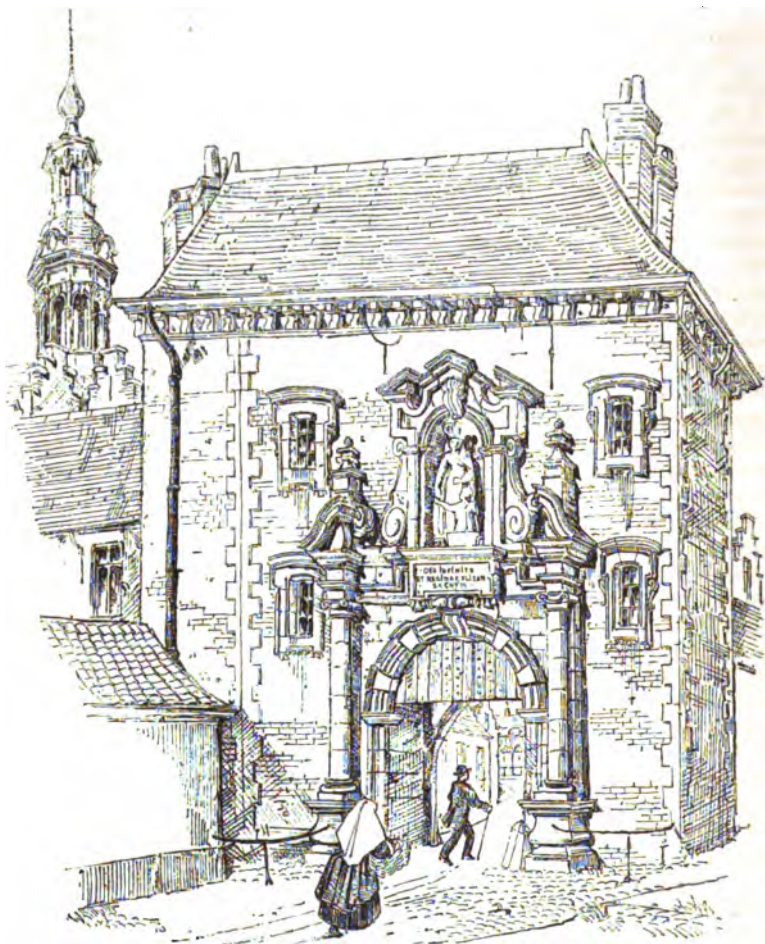
Flemish home was in his heart, his Flemish friends around him, when, yet a boy in years, he set foot on the fairest of his possessions, then in the zenith of her splendour and prosperity. He looked coldly on her people, the proudest in Europe; and, Catholic as he was, received with haughty reserve the aged Ximenes hastening, weighed down with age and infirmities, to greet the grandson of Ferdinand and Isabella. But time came when he was glad of Spanish arms to keep his Flemings in subjection; and at the point of Spanish swords he entered his native city. No joyous acclamations greeted him when his war-horse once more trod the streets where its great master had taken his first steps; and when, years after, his stormy life had passed into the peace of the cloister, the men of Ghent rose and levelled to the ground the great fortress he had raised, in their anxiety to forget that their mightiest fellow-citizen had had the ill-luck to be their lord.

But what fortune, what success was his! He was a child when he became lord of the land that gave him birth, and ere he reached man's estate four royal diadems, one of them being the imperial crown, were set upon his brow. Before his victorious arms Christian and Turk alike bowed down. The Eternal City yielded herself to his army, and the sovereign pontiff fled from the capital of Christendom. Naples opens her gates to him in triumph. Bologna welcomes him victorious. Who would not envy his glory and greatness as he passed, magnificently attended, along the gaily-decked streets of the old mediæval city to the cathedral, where the iron crown, the sacred relic-circle of Lombardy, is set on his head. He is still young in years, but he

has reached the summit of earthly greatness—general, count, arch-duke, king on both sides the Atlantic, emperor; but a shadow, of which the long shades of the grim leaning towers were a faint type, lay across his shining path. Presently there comes news that Ghent has risen, and then the scales are turned. The home of his childhood and its citizens, his earliest subjects and fellow-townsmen are leagued against him. Soon all Flanders is in revolt. The Pope, no longer the gentle Louvain professor, under whose care his happy boyhood was passed, but a deep, scheming statesman, and a Medici, to boot, was his enemy. His own mother's sister, the rejected wife of the king of England, had ended her saddened life in durance. His son was wedded to her childless daughter. Wounded in his religious sympathies and in his affections, he was to suffer in that pride of arms which years of success had fostered. Algiers, Roussillon, Cerissoles, Innsbruck, saw his forces beaten and repulsed. From the last-named town he who so short a time back did not know what defeat meant fled in ignoble terror. The crowns that sat so heavily on that royal head were laid aside one by one. All the winds of Biscay are playing in the too early silvered hairs, as, reft of earthly coronal, it bows to mother-earth, and whispers in her ear, 'Naked came I forth from my mother; naked come I back to thee, thou common mother of mankind.' And then, as the din of battle, the tramp of the war-horse, the braying trumpet and the roll of drums, the thunder of cannon and the clash of steel, all the sounding noise of strife rolls away as a storm-cloud far over field and flood, the chant of peaceful men keeping time to the

deep voices of the ocean seems to sound in my ear, and the grey towers of San Yusto rise before me. 'Requiem æternam dona ei.' Their shadows seem verily to lie across my path; the peace and rest of a refuge long sought

Fields, which, as we all know, covers the same area as the great Pyramid. This by way of being precise, and for the sake of those poor folk who can never grasp the dimensions of a given number of square feet and inches. All



G. de la

Old Gateway of the Béguinage

for, and reached but too late, falls on my heart, and, lo! I am passing under the gateway of the old Béguinage.

A long square or green, about half as large as Lincoln's Inn

around are the trim and tidy dwellings of the Béguines, little white-and-red brick edifices, with high gabled roofs of red tile, and bright green window-shutters, for all the world like toy houses.

Each has before it a small fore-court, separated from the public way by a high white wall, entered by a narrow arched doorway, above which is painted the name of the saint under whose patronage or invocation the dwelling and its inhabitant are placed—H. Jans Huys, or Het Huys van H. Maria, as the case may be. In the midst of the green, rather at the lower end, which is exquisitely kept, and like a lawn fringed with trimmed and cut lime-trees, stands the great church, a long and lofty edifice, uniform in style, and built of brick. Over the high roof rises the tall and elegant belfry, which is seen in my sketch just above the houses to the left of the old gate. Within, the church presents an aspect rather homely than imposing. It has that comfortable and furnished air so many of the Continental churches seem to me to have. Each familiar object—the altar, and its picture and statues, the suspended lamps, and the quaint figures against the pillars, and then the huge, lumbering pulpit with its great sounding-board, and the old worn benches and little green kneeling-cushions; all mark a period in the history of the place; each has its own story and associations. To how many simple hearts who have worshipped here have these things grown dear by familiarity!

The altar-piece is handsome, composed, like most of those in Belgian churches, of white and black marble, with a large picture in the midst. Over the centre is a statue of the good Saint Elizabeth of Hungary, about whom the gentle Montalembert wrote so gracefully. That is her statue also over the old gateway, where she is seen giving alms to a poor cripple, to whom a species of tub

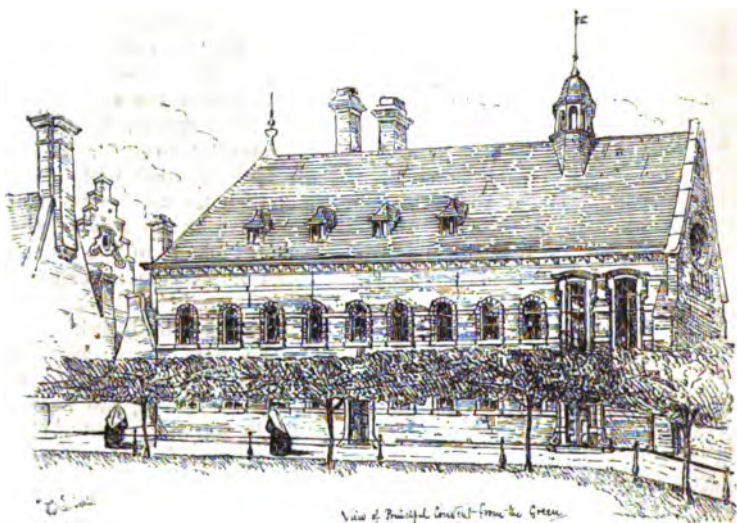
supplies the natural organs of locomotion. The sculptor, with horrible exactness, has not even omitted the little wooden blocks, something after the manner of knife-rests, which assist the unfortunate man in his movements. On either side of the nave of the church are two large spaces inclosed by wooden railings. Within these are the benches and priediens of the Béguines. The broad central alley is devoted to 'strangers and pilgrims.' Here it was that I assisted at the evening service; and a curious and wonderful sight it was. The spacious church was filled with kneeling figures, white-veiled and ghostlike. In the dim distance the altar, with its glimmering tapers, faintly lit up the evening twilight. Then the air became filled with sweet incense; then the mellow notes of an old organ mingled with the shrill, weird chant of the sisters. It left an impression never to be forgotten.

The houses of the Béguines, all round the square, and one or two adjoining streets, or 'plaines,' as they are termed here, are over a hundred in number. But beside these there *were* (for I am speaking, alas, of what no longer *is*) eighteen convents appropriated to the younger members of the community, who there make their probation, or to those who prefer the advantages of a 'home,' so to speak, to the usual solitary condition of a Béguine. I had the privilege of visiting the chief of these establishments, that wherein resides the 'Groot Jufvrouw,' or grande dame, as the superior of the Béguines is called. I give a little view of it; the two large windows seen over the trees at the end are those of the church. There is also a small quadrangle, and some spacious apartments devoted to various purposes. One of these, a

sort of council or chapter house, or, as we should term it, a board-room, had tall windows with little panes of glass, through which the sunlight was pouring, only just shaded by some faded green curtains, on to the chequered black-and-white floor, just as De Hooze loved to paint it with, O how cunning a hand! All round the room were quaint chairs with high backs; and above the panelling facing the windows a range of portraits of former superiors, many of them, especially the earlier ones,

the assurance of his protection, and the promise 'Je maintiendrai,' and to which, in the sequel, he so faithfully adhered. The words are seen on the carved mantelpiece, before which the king is represented standing and pointing to them. Opposite him are seen a parish priest of Ghent and a pious nobleman, who had interested themselves in the Béguinage and formed the deputation.

I was shown one of the cells, of which I think St. Bernard might well have written, 'Cella nunquam



View of Béguinage, Ghent, from the Green.

by no means inconsiderable as works of art. The folded black aprons worn to this day, and the crimped and starched lawn frills, ruffs, wimples, and veils, were portrayed with that marvellous fidelity to reality for which the Flemish schools of painting are so renowned. Here, too, was a picture representing the famous deputation to King William of Holland in the early part of the present century, when the existence of the Béguinage was threatened, and which elicited from the king

nomen miseræ,' for a brighter, more tidy, cosy little *chambre à coucher* I have seldom seen. Another 'Dutch interior,' I exclaimed mentally, as I entered and took in at a glance the pretty picture before me—the flowers in the window-sill, the little lattice through which the sun shone brightly on the waxed floor, the little bed, with its tidy green curtains drawn all round, and its snowy linen just peering beneath their edges; a quaint-shaped chair or two, and a few trifling articles, completed the

furniture, while on the walls were some pictures of a sacred character. In this room, however, was one of the curious little buffets which are usually placed in the refectory, and which serves the Béguine as dining-table and store closet. It was of substantial oak, prettily panelled, with quaint hinges and locks of polished white metal, and in three divisions or stories: the lowest was, if I remember rightly, a sort of china and linen closet. Above this a flap let down or drew out at the level of an ordinary dining-table. Here the Béguine sat to take her meals, the cupboard door, when open, forming a screen between her and her next-door neighbour, the Béguines not being supposed to know what each other have for dinner. Within were her provisions for the next meal, her china and glass in use, and little condiments. The top-most division was devoted, I fancy, to a sort of dry larder. Thanking the good sister who had shown me the house, I went my way, and was soon in the square again, lingering there as the pleasing impressions grew and grew on me. As I passed one of the little houses, a Béguine, a bright-eyed old lady, who was sweeping her little yard, looked out at her gate and offered to show me her sanctum—a Béguine's house, which she, as she told me, shared with another.

'Would monsieur be pleased to come in?' and she said a few words in the language of my country, for which she professed great admiration. She liked the English, she said, because they were 'si calme,' and added that calmness, peace, were the characteristics of a Béguine's life. And when I said I knew of no Béguinages in France, and wondered at it, she said at once she was not surprised. It was too quiet and undemonstrative a life for them;

there was no excitement; and she shrugged her shoulders expressively, and said, shaking her head and laughing, 'In France, O no no, no;' then she added, 'Mais en Angleterre c'est tout autre chose.' She fancied it would suit the female character at home. I thought, however (to say nothing of our friend the member for Peterborough), that the resolution of English damsels, in the proportion of seven hundred to one hundred and twenty thousand of the inhabitants, to seclude themselves, and



leave the poor stronger sex to take care of itself, might not be looked upon favourably at home. Besides, O ladies, pardon me, I thought with dread of the mischief brewed with Bohea, where the female element is strong, and of that magnified seventy times seven hundred; and then the spiritual pastors and masters would be eligible young men and marriageable; and I thought the undertaking might be attended with inconvenience, and would not meet with general approval. This reminds me of the bitter complaints my little Béguine

made against the conduct of some of my countrymen, especially younger ones, in the church during service, talking loud, and staring under the sisters' white veils at the demure faces. Now, besides being very low and vulgar, this detestable behaviour is exceedingly foolish. I would remind the gay young sparks that if they have so very little sympathy with the practical contempt for the nobler animal, which has issued in the seclusion of these seven hundred and odd ladies, rudeness, at all events, is not the way to convince them of their error. A Béguine makes no vows; she is free to leave when she likes; but, if report speaks truly, a Béguine is never known to avail herself of this liberty. They get on tolerably well without us, those seven hundred and odd unprotected females.

So we changed the awkward topic, about which we thought more than we could say, for neither of us knew perfectly the only medium of conversation possible to us—French; and the Béguine then showed me her pretty work—beautiful lace of several kinds and varieties. I am not learned in this matter; but I know I like those soft, pretty, gauzy things that fitly adorn the fair, point and Valenciennes; and I took a little specimen as a memento, ‘au plaisir,’ &c. And if ever I again visit Ghent, may I find my little friend well; happy she will always be, I know, and prosperous, for her wants are few and easily supplied. I have her ‘card’ now, with ‘near the church’ in English upon it. She wrote it herself in red ink, and was mightily proud of it.

But, alas! poor little Mdlle. Van E—’s house is desolate, and where in her new home she dwells I know not. She and her sisters departed last Michaelmas Day, and

made their exodus quite in a triumphal manner. Over four hundred had already gone (and perhaps my little friend was among them) to make the place ‘comfortable.’ So on Saint Michael’s Day, at two in the afternoon, there came a hundred carriages, with the arms of some of the highest people in Flanders on their panels, and drew up in the square, a lady of the family to whom the equipage belonged being seated in each to receive and escort three of the sisters; strange damsels, I ween, for those Flemish dames to chaperon. When all were ready, off they started in procession to the commune of St. Amand, where the new Béguinage is erected. Here were triumphal arches, and garlands, and bands of music, and the burgomaster, and the bishop of Ghent in pontificals, and the Duke of Arenberg, the munificent donor of the site and buildings of the new Béguinage, were there to bid the sisters welcome. A writer in one of the London papers thus describes the new buildings:—‘The visitor to the new buildings will find there,’ he says, ‘no type of modern creation, no cold array of stuccoed constructions all in a row . . . ; he will see “plaines,” as they are called, three in number, surrounded by houses and convents, each differing from the other, and each so picturesque, so beautiful, with their lofty pointed roofs, and their seriously-designed façades; he will see streets, opening in graceful curves upon the “plaines,” and showing with ornamental plates that they are called after S. Amadeus, S. Bavo, Pius IX., the Holy Cross d’Arenberg; he will see fourteen convents, each with accommodation for thirty or thirty-five Béguines, . . . beside eighty-four distinct houses, each placed under the especial patronage and known by the name of

some "protecting saint." There is also an infirmary and house of retreat for the old and sick, a vast church, and an oratory dedicated to S. Antony. There, too, is perpetuated the memory of Theresa Verhaeghe, a Béguine who died a few years back, with a reputation for great holiness. The new site was the gift of the Duke d'Arenberg, the distinguished antiquary, who has got, or thinks he has got, the *right* head of the Laocoon, the body whereof, as we know, belongs to the Pope. The church was designed by an architect of great talent, also a nobleman, the Baron Béthune, a brother of Canon Béthune of the cathedral at Bruges, who is a most accomplished ecclesiastic and profound archaeologist.'

For my part, though I have not seen the new Béguinage, and am quite willing to think all the writer, whose glowing description I have quoted, says about it, may be quite true, I look with profound regret on the old deserted Béguinage. Nothing surely can replace that. Its empty, desolate houses, its vast, silent church, what are they but the body from which the soul has fled? On that very spot Jeanne, Countess of Constantinople, founded their first house, and gave its inmates a rule of life, in 1234. A still earlier founder of the principles on which their society exists is stated to have been a priest of Liège, Lambert Le Begue, and from him they are said to take their name. The first institution of the kind was founded at Nivelles, in Brabant, in 1207; and, toward the middle of the thirteenth century, scarcely any large town in Flanders was without its Béguinage, 'grand' or petit, and often, as now, both. Mosheim the 'learned,' as it is, I believe, correct to call him, says there was a Béguinage at Vilvorden as early as

the twelfth century. In M. Paul Lacroix's superb work on the '*Vie Religieuse et Militaire du Moyen Age*,' there is a little bird's-eye view taken from '*Les Eglises de Gand*,' by P. J. Goetghebuer, of the Béguinage. It is there stated to occupy the same ground and to follow the same general arrangement as at the time of its foundation by the Comtesse Jeanne. I trace there the same general arrangement—the same positions of the houses and central church, the green, and three main streets—that exists, or rather existed, so short a time ago; so soon, alas! to be destroyed. We sit among ruins, and are fain to cry out with the magician in the Eastern tale, 'New lamps for old.' It is the old things that bear the charm. When they are gone the fairy palace itself melts into airy nothingness. And then we rush after imitation old things. We have a mediæval revival, and, as a necessary result, no end of 'sham antiques.' People, twenty years ago, took to building Gothic houses, and tried to live like Gothic folk. They had Gothic chairs and tables, and very uncomfortable they were; and Gothic knives and forks, albeit the fingers, proverbially 'made before' those useful implements, supplied their place to the *real* Gothic people. *Nous avons changé tout cela*, and the very things we considered as 'pagan abominations' then are 'the rage' now. We even do admit that on the whole Chippendale furniture is substantial and convenient; and 'Queen Anne' is not dead after all: or rather she has come to life again, and has brought all kinds of funny notions back with her from the limbo of kings and queens. She no longer eats off her plate, but hangs it up like a picture on the wall. She has a fondness for black and gold, and she picked up an

idea or two from the Japanese tycoon and the late Mr. Pugin in Hades, and is generally the patroness of the quaint, the curious, and the queer. And so the world goes on, and what we, perhaps, look shyly on as modern, our children will love as 'fogey,' as we do the funny prints and specimens in 'Ackermann's Repository,'—that wonderful book!—and our grand-

children revive as 'correct,' 'chic,' in fact, if that naughty, bad word be still in use among men.

We have wandered far away from the Béguinage now. Let us cast one look back at it and the ancient city in whose midst it has nestled so long, and gathering all its pleasant memories into our adieux, bid it a long farewell.

PERIGRINUS.

TO BELINDA JANE.

WE walked in pleasant spots, and thou
Wast loving to me of thy wont ;
We once thought love would last, but now
We don't.

Our love was wide as skies above,
For lovers ne'er can love by halves ;
Our love was likest to the love
Of calves.

That day was sweet—ah ! not like this—
Yea, sweeter than the fabled honey :
The one sad thought that spoilt our bliss
Was money.

We thought thereon, our hearts grew sad,
Our fates we vainly execrated :
O Time, that changest all, I'm glad
I waited !

For now, Belinda Jane, I'm bald,
And thou'rt an aged maiden lady ;
Thine age that side of fifty called
The shady.

Yet once again we'll play our parts,
While joy dispels oblivious mist ;
And we will see each other's hearts
At whist.

GORDON CAMPBELL.

RAPE OF THE GAMP.

CHAPTER XIX.

CARE KILLS A CAT.

BEFORE the boys dispersed for their Christmas holidays the head-master of the school at Pedlington again talked with his colleague on the painful subject of the distance which had been allowed to separate them. Being thrown so much together, as they had been now every day during terms for two years and a half, and closely allied in the common interest which existed between them and their pupils, being also on terms of old intimacy and proved friendship, it seemed always increasingly strange to Dr. Phelps that Mr. Lane should show such a persistent resolution to live alone, and to retire to his solitude whenever acknowledged duty did not summon him from it. Phelps, although a childless widower bordering on middle-age, who in more than one sense of the expression might seem 'to have done with the world,' and so much occupied with a literary undertaking, in addition to his scholastic cares, as to have little time for general society (though general society in Pedlington was willing enough to incorporate the Doctor into its community), was yet of that social and genial temperament that he would have liked to sit with his old friend over their private studies and pursuits, and to have shared the hours of recreation with Mr. Lane, instead of sitting and working alone, as he now too often for a widower did in the long winter nights after the boys had gone to bed, and instead of depending for daily intercourse on his relations with the boys, and with his third

master, who was only a gentlemanly senior boy. Still these scholastic relations were so pleasant and intimate, and especially in summer Dr. Phelps partook so frequently of the games and sports which rivalled intellectual attainments in the youthful aspirations, that he felt himself to be less lonely and less in danger of giving way to melancholy than he had reason to believe was the case with his friend.

Was religion, or were the differences arising out of religious convictions, the cause of the partial estrangement between them? Dr. Phelps feared that it was so. Each year, as he grew older and found himself less and less in accord with religious people of any school or sect, he took refuge in a callous indifference to any prevailing set of opinions, outwardly, and more than outwardly in some philosophical and subjective sense, conforming to the creed of the universal church, as a body of doctrine generally beneficial to society, if people would only observe the law of charity, and not attempt to enforce any limited interpretation of this code upon their neighbours.

With those who did so Phelps had little patience. And although moderate persons esteemed him a fit and proper guardian of youth in a school where all shades of religious opinion were represented, yet the more zealous pietists of Pedlington, whether High Church, Low Church, or of any Nonconforming sect, considered him a dangerous guide to the young in

a perverse and stiff-necked generation, and prayed over him (somewhat despondently, it must be owned) in their secret council chambers. He was, they said, upright and highly intellectual. His character was truly amiable. But these qualities of Dr. Phelps only made *it* (probably meaning 'his case') all the more sad, and *him* all the more dangerous. His good works would recommend his unbelief, so they said. The new rector of the mother parish had been urged to express an opinion reprobating the Doctor's equivocal orthodoxy. But privately that divine would have been far more distressed at the presence of a Calvinist in that influential position, and wisely threw oil upon the agitated waters. He professed to believe that the schoolmaster's theology was only defective in positive or dogmatic vigour, and declared, as he verily believed, that Phelps' sympathies were all in the right direction.

Whatever the real cause, if, indeed, any one operated alone as the source of Mr. Lane's tenacious exclusiveness, Dr. Phelps was still unable to overcome it. His friend even declined now to entertain him for a fortnight at the abbey, as he had done during several previous vacations, pleading a particular wish to go into strict retirement for a while in a clergy house at the East End of London, after what he was pleased to call 'the dissipations of the half year,' and the necessity of preparing immediately afterward for his impending move. This was none the less sad to Dr. Phelps from the intimacy which he had seen rapidly growing up between his friend and their new rector, and an evident inclination on the part of Mr. Lane to take the ecclesiastic into his closer confidence.

So the Doctor wended his soli-

tary way to town, where he had to meet Mr. Lane's contemplated successor. He also had work to do among his authorities at the British Museum, and intended to make a flying visit to a German university to procure assistance from one of its professors. On the evening of this third day in London, Phelps, returning by way of Chancery Lane from Bloomsbury to the Inner Temple, where he was quartered on a friend, encountered Mr. Lane, who in the wintry twilight passed him without recognition. The Doctor did not fail to notice the gloom of his friend's aspect, and turning to look after him, saw Mr. Lane striding along grimly, apparently perceiving no one, but wrapped in his own solitary mood. The spot where they met was not far from the door of Messrs. Baily, Blythe, and Baily's offices. Not many minutes had elapsed since Mr. Lane had been made acquainted with the loss of his reversionary interest, and had burned his grandfather's last will and testament, as we have already learned through the humble instrumentality of Joseph Foot.

Only a few days after this encounter a telegraphic message followed Dr. Phelps from the Temple to the British Museum, which caused him promptly to desert some interesting black-letter folios and take the train for Pedlington. The summons was from the Rev. Cyprian Key, imploring Phelps to return without an hour's delay. It stated that his friend was gravely ill, in mind or body, or both; that Key was alarmed, and anxious for the presence of the only person whom he thought capable of supporting their afflicted brother.

What new affliction could have befallen Mr. Lane? Dr. Phelps knew of none, nor of those which

had overtaken the Brownes. A fine moral could be drawn from the situation. But it would be flat and stale, if not unprofitable. Do not afflictions happen to all men? Do our absent friends foresee them? Is not the prodigal son waltzing with a scheming coquette while a fond mother is calling upon him with her dying breath? Will the drowning moan of a sailor husband interrupt the melodious warbling of Patti to which the fond wife listens with a rapturous smile?

'Is he in bed?' asked Phelps of Mr. Key, whom he found in possession of Mr. Lane's sitting-room.

'Hush!' Key whispered. 'He is in there,' and pointed to the secret door of the apartment which the birds inhabited. 'I slept here last night,' he continued; 'but he would not speak. He has not even a chair in the room, and must have been standing at the window or sitting on the floor for three days and nights, without eating or drinking.'

'What has happened?' Phelps asked.

'I think he had better tell you, for his own sake,' replied Key. 'The only word he would speak is your name. He shouted to me last night to go away; but I staid; and every hour or two I heard him groaning out for you, as if he was in agony.'

'Thank you for sending to me,' said the layman, wringing the parson's hand. Then without more parley he knocked at the secret door, and called aloud, 'Bedford! Let me come in. You know my voice.'

'Who else is there?' asked a hollow voice within.

'Key.'

From within: 'Beg him to go away.'

'I thought so,' said the parson sadly. 'I must go my rounds

now, Phelps; but I shall be at home in the evening if you want me. I shall not come unless you send for me.'

Turning on the threshold, he added, 'It is too severe, much too severe. He is too hard on himself. *I did not even foresee it.*'

And so the confessor departed. And in this brief story, which is but a chapter in the lives of a few humble and everyday persons, we shall see him no more.

Before the sound of the door closing upon him had ceased to echo through the long chambers and empty corridors of the abbey the secret door opened to admit Phelps; and the latter could see that the occupant of the chamber had been leaning with his elbows on the window-ledge, looking out across the garden and river and the overhanging mist, through which the shouts of bargemen at the lock came with a strange, weird sound.

It has been formerly said that this approach to the town had the air of a decayed city. This was especially the case on the river-side. The mouldering abbey, with its long range of ruinous walls and offices, the antiquated Gothic church, the quaintly-terraced cliff with its gable ends of the old episcopal palace and its pollarded willow fringe, the very canalised river, itself a relic of the old water highways of England, formed a group of objects which belonged less to the present than the past. And while the town, not half a mile distant, was singularly busy for an English county town, this suburb was almost always silent and solitary.

The chamber in which Dr. Phelps now found himself for a second time was part of an ancient passage, opened by Mr. Lane himself with the assistance of Tobias Graves, in the ponderous outer

wall of the ancient refectory, a part of which formed the sitting and sleeping apartments of the present occupier. From the lattice window you saw merely the ruin of an outhouse at hand, a broken parapet along the lower edge of a terrace-walk, and the misty sheet of water with a small lockhouse dimly looming on the farther bank. The narrow space was littered with books and papers. On the deep window-ledge lay a number of time-worn, crumpled letters and a faded old copy of a German newspaper. Among these the end of a pistol-barrel caught Phelps' observant eye. The favourite tomtit stood disconsolately among this litter, despising the social charms of the fishing-rods and ramrods upon which the other birds clustered, doubtless comparing notes on their master's behaviour. A strong aroma of some obnoxious drug loaded the scanty supply of air in the room. But the long arm which opened the door closed it at once. Not a word was spoken while the two men studied each other's faces, one eager and anxious, but resolute; the other gaunt and terrible, glaring at the intruder. His eyes gleamed with a strange lustre in great hollows under his rugged brows. He wore no coat. His arms, brown and sinewy, were bared to the elbow, and his open shirt, from which the studs had fallen, exposed his broad, massive breast. If it had come to a life-and-death struggle between those two, Dr. Phelps knew that his moments were numbered. But he discerned no symptoms of madness in those 'sad eyes,' and as soon as this became clear to his perception a great load seemed to be lifted from his own mind and body. He must have expected to make that terrible discovery, or the relief could not have been so great. No; that

was not a madman's gaze. It was a strong man, racked and torn with grief and goaded with remorse, brooding amidst the ruins of a life. Key had called him Pontius Pilate; Phelps now silently compared him to Saul, and perhaps the layman's simile was not less apt than the priest's.

A curious characteristic of this meeting between two tried and approved friends was that the usual forms of greeting did not even seem to occur to either of their minds. 'How d'ye do?' or 'How are you, old fellow?' would have been a contemptible mockery. The Doctor's keen, eager glance searched Mr. Lane's agonized eyes, which in their turn sought the meaning of his almost nervously. The little bird, with its head on one side, also watched Dr. Phelps with narrow scrutiny. When he appeared to be relieved of his first terrible apprehension, and looked toward the litter of papers, the bird gave a sympathetic chirrup, jumped a few little paces, and alighted on the muzzle of the pistol.

'What is this?' said Phelps, displacing the bird and taking up the weapon.

The bird at once fluttered on to its master's shoulder, and eyed the intruder attentively.

'A pistol,' said Mr. Lane.

'Yes, I see,' Dr. Phelps rejoined; 'but what for?'

'Why are you come here?' Mr. Lane retorted.

Phelps hesitated for a moment. He doubted whether he should seem to have come by chance, but he had never deceived his friend, and would not do so now.

'I am come,' he said, 'to save you from yourself—to save my friend of old days from this hard fellow, Mr. Lane.'

'Hard, yes, hard,' said the other slowly, and speaking to himself.

Then again, 'Hard, yes, hard indeed! Poor child!'

Phelps was not slow to catch the last words. He knew nothing of what had happened between his friend and Janet Browne, but had seen that some little tenderness or friendship was springing up between them, and had from the first ardently hoped that it might be so, and that (though he had signally failed in his own attempt on Mr. Browne) Janet and his friend might ultimately become man and wife, so that half the fortune which was to have been Bedford Lyte's might still become his, and with it something worth the other half twice told; for Dr. Phelps was not one of your philosophers who make light of the treasure of a woman's heart. For Bedford's secret, as a moral obstacle, he cared little and feared less, though it might present material difficulties. His confidence in one whom he had never proved to be unworthy of it was unbounded. For the change of name he did feel sorry, and had strongly dissuaded his friend from persevering in it on his return to England. But Bedford had made it the condition of his alliance, and Phelps had yielded the point.

To the new head-master of the Pedlington School it had seemed almost unendurable that an honest man, his friend and colleague, should take shelter in an *alias* from some old opprobrium. But to Bedford Lyte, the naturally proud and sensitive man, the reputation of Bedford Lyte, the reputed libertine, would have been quite unendurable. Besides which, though Phelps, in his generous confidence and in his consummate reliance upon his own approval of his own acts, would have ventured upon opening the school with a coadjutor whose former ill repute might soon get noised abroad,

yet his friend had felt sure that such a step would be a false one, and that the moral timidity of the Pedlingtonians would have ill requited Phelps' moral courage. Beyond these two abundant reasons why need we seek? Yet there was another reason, which of itself would have been sufficient to make Mr. Lane adhere to the *alias* which it had caused him to adopt in Germany.

'Hard indeed! Poor child!' he now repeated to himself, speaking slowly and abstractedly, as though he had been alone; Phelps watching him meanwhile with eager eyes and ears, desiring greatly to know and share the whole burden of his friend's experience, that he might, as he said, in the face of his present danger, 'save him from himself.' This was doubly urgent now. Dr. Phelps liked not the look of that pistol; and if this moment of anguish were tided over, was not Mr. Lane leaving Pedlington, and again about to cast his lot among strangers?

Could our eyes penetrate those thick walls, it would be strange to see these two men standing together in that narrow, dark space, one so intent on the other, that other so careless of his presence. As Frank had ingenuously intimated in their last interview, it was not easy to see the charm about Mr. Lane which attracted people so strongly to him. But the attraction, whatever it was, acted quite as powerfully on the rude as on the gentle sex. Dr. Phelps thought it no more hardship that he should have left his black-letter folios and be here exerting his thankless efforts of friendship in behalf of this man than the Rev. Cyprian Key had grudged his last night's rest in keeping a weary vigil outside Mr. Lane's chamber door. But perhaps the parson may have had some

little misgiving of undue severity in the counsel which he had tendered to Mr. Lane. Seeing how fast a hold this love for Janet had gained upon her reluctant admirer, and feeling in his conscience that to indulge it ever so little would be a sin, and wishing for his friend above all things a triumph over the enemy of his soul, he had reminded his penitent that it was better to enter into life maimed than, having a sound body, to be cast in hell fire. 'Tear it out by the roots,' he had urged. 'Count not the cost. Spare not yourself; rather inflict wounds the rankling of which shall destroy this vice of your blood.' And then when old Ada had informed him of the severities which Mr. Lane was practising upon himself, and when he reflected how terrible might be this fight between a master-passion which had entrenched itself in the citadel, and a stern, loyal man resolved to oust and vanquish it, he became alarmed. He thought this man quite capable of destroying himself if the enemy would not yield. He would expect to carry the fortress by a *coup de main*, and would chafe at the slightest repulse. So Mr. Key had watched and prayed throughout the night, and in the early morning had telegraphed for Phelps.

'Hard, hard; yes indeed, hard,' Mr. Lane continued to mutter. 'Poor child!'

Phelps was quite at a loss. Did Bedford mean Eleanor Bailey? or had something happened in Pedlington during his absence, and was Janet Browne the subject of this lament? Mr. Lane's presence in the neighbourhood of Bailey's office in Chancery Lane, which Phelps had so recently witnessed, inclined him to think that some circumstance had lately revived the misery concerning Miss Bailey, whatever that

misery might be. The old, frayed, soiled letters and newspaper in the window indicated the same source of grief and remorse. But some secret power of divination suggested another name, and Dr. Phelps went at once to the point. 'Do you mean pretty Janet Browne?' he asked.

Mr. Lane nodded, still gazing intently at his friend, who saw a faint clearing of the brow, as if the confidence were a relief to the sufferer.

'You have formed an attachment for her?' Phelps continued.

Again he nodded. An unbidden tear suffused each of those dark, deep-sunken eyes.

'And she has returned it?' resumed Dr. Phelps.

But now Mr. Lane's glance faltered and failed. His whole figure relaxed its bold posture, trembled, cowered, and finally fell upon its knees at the window-ledge, planting its elbows thereon, lowering the face into the up-turned palms, and shaken with convulsive sobs.

Then Dr. Phelps knew that his friend's love had been returned, and that this mutual attachment was not to enjoy a blissful sequel, but that, for some reason as yet unknown to him, it was an unfortunate passion, and Mr. Lane thought he had done wrong in allowing it to take root.

Phelps had never seen his friend overcome by such violent grief before. Yet he esteemed it to be a breaking up of the ice, and a blessed tenderness succeeding the sterner sorrow of the last few days.

It was about four o'clock in the winter afternoon, and the room was almost dark; but still the figure of the strong man knelt in its weakness, and from time to time a shudder passed over it, and at each of these spasms the little

bird on his shoulder partly opened its wings and closed them again with a gentle chirrup, as though it approved of nature's sweet and spontaneous relief. On a sudden a faint glimmer of light, soft and radiant, lit up the bowed head and kneeling form, and threw into bold relief that of the small bird, which uttered a melodious trill, half sad, half joyous, in its minor key. Mr. Lane lifted his head, upon which a golden radiance fell; and presently without, in the space where previously the grey mist had blurred the landscape, a glorious rainbow now appeared. The canaries came fluttering to a perch in the embrasure of the window, and all this little company gazed with rapture at the changing splendours of the bow, which seemed placed there by the beneficent Father in token of His abiding goodness and watchful care over His erring children.

Doubtless this thought crossed the minds of these two men at the same time; for as the bow faded out of the heavens, two gently-spoken words were uttered by the kneeling man, and Dr. Phelps (having quickly stooped to catch) now fervently repeated them:

'*Laus Deo!*'

Dr. Phelps was sincerely rejoiced that anything should have evoked on the part of his friend the feeling which must have prompted these words. For they were the first he had spoken since his monotonous reiteration of the words, 'Hard, hard!' and 'Poor child!'

'May I open the window?' asked Phelps. And Mr. Lane, rising, opened it himself. It was secured inside by a wire-worked frame, which prevented the birds from going out or their enemies from coming in when the lattice was open.

As the fresh air greeted their nostrils Dr. Phelps, wishing to

speak on indifferent subjects, said, 'What drug is it the smell of which filled this quaint little room?'

'*Hyosciamus.*'

'Do you take much of it?' he asked.

'Very seldom.'

Suddenly the place was shaken with a great shock, accompanied by a loud report. A great smell of gunpowder and cloud of smoke succeeded to the fumes of *hyosciamus*, and as these cleared away before the draught of air coming up from the river, Mr. Lane appeared with an air of exultation in face and mien, pointing with a pistol through the shattered wire-work. Dr. Phelps first looked at the weapon in his own hand, to make sure that he had not relinquished it, then following with his eye the line of Mr. Lane's, discovered with some difficulty in the fading daylight the body of a large white cat, lying motionless at the foot of a broken wall.

'At last!' cried the marksman.

'Was it an old offender, then?' Phelps inquired.

Mr. Lane reminded him of his old superstition about his guardian angel or good genius inhabiting the humble form of the tomtit, and told him that a feud existed between the cat and bird, which puzzled him much, and had made him resolve to take the cat's life. It seems the offending animal would sit in a point of vantage and watch the window for hours, to the great terror of the other birds, his little favourite manifesting no fear at all, which he attributed to the superior nature with which it was marvellously endowed. But he had noticed the bird to sail after each of these feline visits, and one evening, when pussy had been on guard during his absence, Tommy almost committed *felo de se*. The affectionate little creature

had a habit of sitting for hours on the rail of the fender at his feet, and even roosting there during some of his long winter night watches. On the evening in question, when he opened the secret door as usual on his return for the night, the bird had flown directly from the lattice window across the room, into the fiery space underneath the grate, where it was confused and dazzled and almost roasted alive. He saved it with difficulty, and was much disturbed when (going to the small window) he saw the ghostly form of the white cat stealing away in the darkness.

Beyond this narrative Phelps could learn nothing as to Mr. Lane's strange antipathy to this creature. Afterward he alluded to the period of his seclusion as 'an ambuscade,' but Phelps could not believe that he was really lying in wait for a cat all that time, nor that its appearance and forfeiting its life at the present time were more than a coincidence. However, the occurrence was most serviceable. When a man's mind is almost unhinged with a lever of unremitting anguish, some old familiar turn will sometimes restore its balance. And probably the sudden revival of Mr. Lane's former anger with the cat, and the triumph of his successful shot, may have served to distract his mind from its one intolerable care. Certainly from this time he began to realise his friend's presence. The necessity of fully confiding the past to this faithful ally had been urged upon him by Key, and now presented itself to his mind. The old fear of losing Phelps' regard by this confidence revived within him. In short, he began to be himself again after a period of unnatural abstraction and morbid abandonment to a single idea.

'Now the enemy is fairly repulsed. Let us move out of our intrenchments, and give the dead sepulture,' he said quite manfully.

'*Mitte supervacuus honores,*' Dr. Phelps rejoined, with a smile; and added, 'I am very hungry. Let us order some supper as we go.'

The faithful Ada was hovering about the door of the sitting-room nervously. 'We have killed the white cat at last. Let us have some supper at once,' the master said to her. And the good creature gave vent to a great sigh of relief, for she had been tortured with vague apprehensions.

Phelps accompanied him into the old terraced garden, where Mr. Lane persisted in digging a hole and burying his foe, during which operation the bird fluttered to and fro with every appearance of joy, though it was the hour only for bats and owls to be on the wing. Then turning upon Phelps, who was smoking a short wooden pipe, he said, 'Let me have that,' with which request the other silently complied. A breeze was coming up from the west, and the stars twinkled out one by one. They paced to and fro on the long, broad terrace-walk, where in old times many a monk had told his beads and many an abbot planned the aggrandisement of his house and order, or perchance the very culture of this garden, now infested with kex and other stubborn weeds, the home of rabbits, moles, and rats.

'Why did you come to-day, Henry?' asked Mr. Lane, after they had walked a while in silence.

'I told you truly,' the other answered; 'to save you from yourself. Key telegraphed me.'

'You did well to come,' Mr. Lane rejoined; 'well, as far as I am concerned. It is an ignoble act, a rash, impatient folly; but I should have done it.'

'I believe you would,' Phelps said.
'I shall have to bear your contempt
when you know all,' Mr. Lane pleaded.

coming here with an *alias*!' Mr. Lane
urged.

'Ah!' cried Phelps, 'that is how the



'You wouldn't have escaped it so,
however fast old Charon had paddled
you over.'

'If you had only prevented me from
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mischief has occurred, is it?' He was
too generous to remind the sufferer how
strongly he had discountenanced that
measure.

'Or if you had only kept me from going to the house!' resumed Mr. Lane.

'But, my dear fellow, I wanted you to go. I had a wish, and it was father to a belief, that she and you would take to each other.'

Mr. Lane groaned aloud, 'Oh! if I had only told you all, you would have foreseen this calamity, and kept me away.'

The unruly but honest tongue of the Doctor could hardly refrain from pointing out to Mr. Lane how his own reticence and want of candour in bearing his own name were at fault. Still he felt a secret conviction that Janet neither would nor could withdraw her love if she had once given it to his friend. Nor did he believe that Bedford Lyte had so acted as to forfeit the esteem of any woman, however noble, pure, or high-minded.

'But now you will tell me everything, and trust me fully,' he said. 'Remember, you are in a difficulty, and two heads are better than one.'

'Let us end the year like brothers,' pleaded Mr. Lane. 'Tomorrow I will make a clean breast of it; but——'

'But if you broke the whole decalogue as Bedford Lyte, I am ready and willing to forgive you, knowing what I do of your life under this confounded *alias*, which has now become so much a part of you that you will seem to be masquerading in your own name. But why should you fear my judgment? Why should I be more censorious than Key? I know you have confided in him.'

'But Key is a priest.'

'So we are all priests,' resumed Phelps, with whom this was a pet heresy. "Whosoever sins we remit, they are remitted unto him or her." I don't believe Pio Nono nor St. Peter himself had any more power

to remit sins than you or I have. But come and give me something to eat, for the love of Zeus. After all, the old pagan gods are fine fellows, and there's a good deal of vitality about them yet.'

Mr. Lane declined the argument, but his mind was not at ease about his friend's judgment. In youth they two had made a compact with virtue. He had certainly broken that pact, and had allowed more than a lustre to pass away without giving his friend the opportunity of pronouncing whether that breach should sunder them or not.

The philosopher ate heartily, undisturbed by such misgivings, and quite prepared to follow in the parson's footsteps and pronounce a plenary absolution upon Bedford Lyte. The latter gentleman only sipped some beef tea, which his good old Ada had cunningly concocted of meat and isinglass, so that the utmost nourishment was comprised in the smallest compass. Of this she would only give him a small tea-cupful, though he loudly called for more, and affectionately bantered her on having allowed him to fast so long, if, indeed, her story was true, which he professed to doubt.

'And indeed, Dr. Phelps,' said the good creature, 'if master hadn't a-promised, now that he's going away, to take me with him, I wouldn't ha' been answerable to ye for his life. The many and many a time I've a-been at his door with a cup of this nice beef tea, and he to order me off quite severe! Strong, they call him; so he be; and well he *may* be! Taking things to heart so!'

'Come along' out into the fresh air again,' said the subject of this oration, disposing his little bird gently on the back of his pasy-chair, where it released its head from under its wing and opened

one eye for a wink, as much as to say, '*Au revoir!* I will doze here till you go to bed, which you have not done for three nights, you know.'

As we have already intimated, it was the eve of a new year, and the pious rector, without any particular direction in the canons or rubrics, kept it as a vigil, having evensong with a sermon at eight o'clock, and a midnight celebration of the eucharist. 'I have used him ill,' said Mr. Lane; 'I didn't want to be dictated to. I wanted to go out of this dreadful life, and escape from a misery that was crushing me. Ah, Henry, old friend! why did you not save me from myself sooner, and from this last sin, and the misery in which I have involved the sweetest soul that God and nature ever clothed in beauty?'

'The complications may be unravelled yet,' Phelps replied hopefully.

'No,' said the other dolorously; 'my sentence is a life one; and I have been stealing into happy households and an innocent heart, like a ticket-of-leave-man pretending to be a virtuous citizen.'

'That is a case,' said Phelps, astutely turning the subject, 'where society retains a man's sin. Condemn the poor devil to a life sentence, and it matters not how virtuous he becomes. His one sin is retained, hung round his neck, and poisons every act and thought and feeling of his future life.'

Then they turned into the churchyard and walked slowly in the shadow of the old yews which deepen its stony gloom. The weather had become clear and frosty. There was no moon, but the stars were bright and eloquent in the immeasurable azure vault above and around them. The bell for prayers had ceased, and the

last of the scanty congregation had straggled in. Phelps had a shrewd suspicion of what had passed between the parson and his friend, oppressed as he was by an ever-growing burden of secrecy, with the moral perception morbidly keen (the Doctor thought) with that vague longing which possesses some natures who have not the highest faith to trust some system wholly, to bow the neck of Reason to the yoke of consistent self-asserting Dogma, and to take such consolation as may be had in submission, in so-called Remission and Absolution. But for himself, Dr. Phelps thought lightly of such cities of refuge.

'Bedford,' he said, puffing philosophically at his pipe in the sweet, solitary starlight, and now looking upward through the gnarled boughs of a very ancient tree, under which his friend also was kindling a pipe—'Bedford, what a grand satire, this' (here he waved his pipe heavenward)—'this is upon dogma, and ritual, and all littleness!'

As Mr. Lane remained silent, the sceptic continued: 'These stars, my friend, don't move majestically with that glorious rhythmic music through their orbs of space to light that unhappy little hierarch' (probably meaning the Reverend Cyprian) 'and his dozen choristers and his score of devotees on their walk to church and back again. No occasion, my Bedford, to call stars and planets, whole systems, into being for such a purpose. A few tenpenny lanterns would do far better.'

Luckless penitent! Tossed from Rome to Geneva, from Calvin to Key, and now assailed by a philosopher to whom Calvin and Key were both alike. Perhaps grief, his proper mistress at this juncture, stood him in good stead, outweighing the bomb-shells and

hand-grenades of theology in her secret scales. He embraced her, as the unhappy will hug their misery, and she turned a deaf ear to doubt. Bitterly he smiled in his dark resting-place, standing with folded arms, and leaning his broad back against the huge red trunk of the tree.

'And this grim tree,' continued the ex-inspector of Anglican schools, 'must have been vegetating here, transacting its own affairs with decorous gravity, but laughing at Celt and Roman, Saxon and Norman, Lollard and Anglican—laughing at 'em all in turn under its crumpled old bark this sixteen or eighteen centuries or more.'

'You don't mean laughing at their religion?' urged Mr. Lane, now showing some interest in the subject of discourse, which perhaps may have been the object of his wily friend in treading upon such debatable ground.

'Indeed I do,' he calmly rejoined.

'Do you know,' said Mr. Lane, now speaking carefully and with evident conviction, 'this very old tree has often struck me as being a good type of Christianity, with a new life springing continually out of its own decay.'

'And so far you have been right,' Phelps assented. 'There is a germ of truth still in a mass of struggling decomposition, and that keeps flashing out into new life, as you say; for truth can never die. But the whole system is out of date and well-nigh worn out.'

'You don't mean that Christianity itself is nearly worn out?' Mr. Lane urged.

'Yes, I do. It cannot be the crowning religion of the human race.'

'I am sure I hope it is,' said Mr. Lane earnestly.

'I hope not,' the other said, with no less fervour.

Then a great silence fell upon them, made audible, as it were, by the indistinct Gregorian strains within the church. For a while Mr. Lane, so lately contemplating a final act of rebellion against this creed, was smitten with awe lest it should not be the true solution of life's mysteries. Was faith merely a farce tricked out with sham solemnities? Were all puppets who walk through the church's history from Christ till now? Are the soul's experiences mere tricks of a heated imagination? Do the powers of nature indeed laugh at our phantom fights?

It seemed as though a dark veil was drawn across the heavens. The man bereft of his faith, weak as it was to impel or deter him, was surrounded by a dark night. Mighty waves of fear tossed him on their inky summits and wrapped him in their changeful depths. Fierce blasts of doubt and distrust hurried him hither and thither. But now a sweet celestial light moved amidst the darkness and drew near to him. Out of the light there came a voice saying, 'It is I: be not afraid.' The words were few; but to him their import was very great. Recovering himself with an effort, he said, 'Henry, my old friend, do not put Christianity from you because I, or any other weak creature, fall short of my ideal. You would not reject our Parliamentary system because—'

'Wouldn't I,' interrupted the philosopher, 'if the people were ripe for something better. And I, for one, think it high time they were.'

Mr. Lane was bereft of his argument, but resolved to pursue the subject. 'What do you call subjective truth?' he asked.

'A thing being true in relation to one's own mind,' was the answer.

'Then,' persisted the other, 'I have subjective evidence of Christianity which is absolutely overwhelming. I have had a proof of it since we began this conversation. Is that faith?'

'What *you* call faith,' said Phelps.

'But *could* you not have this sort of faith, if you would humble your intellect?' Mr. Lane asked.

'Faith, I had it once,' Phelps answered lightly, puffing out a long jet of smoke; 'but it left me. Or rather *I* left it. It was a phase of experience through which I passed.'

'Should you not want it again if you were dying?'

'No,' replied Phelps gaily, but seriously—'no, I think not. I don't think I should feel any better for it on this side the bourne; and if I found it wrong on t'other, I should be ashamed of myself, and horribly afraid to meet the shade of old Voltaire.'

Doubtless Dr. Phelps knew there was faith of another and, as he thought, of a higher kind. And of this he trusted that he was not devoid; but limited his remarks just then to the special view of a special faith which was uppermost in his friend's mind.

In such a manner this eccentric sage endeavoured to arouse his friend from the stupor into which remorse had plunged him. Before they retired to rest that night he craftily but intrepidly assailed more than one other of Mr. Lane's intellectual strongholds, at once helping to 'quicken that numbed spirit into a renewed vitality, and betraying on his own part, in politics as well as in theology, a heterodoxy which, if recorded in these winged pages, would go far to justify those pious ladies of Pedlington who feared that their new schoolmaster, with all his talents and all his acquirements,

might prove a dangerous guide to the ductile steps of youth.

CHAPTER XX.

A TRAGEDY.

DURING the whole of that New Year's Day Mr. Lane was really engaged in preparing a mental brief out of which to conduct his defence before the jury of his own convictions presided over by Judge Phelps. The latter judicial personage with a covert smile saw him inwardly toiling over it. 'How simple is this pious penitent!' thought Phelps. And of Henry Phelps, D.C.L., M.A., &c., &c., Mr. Lane would often think in almost the very same terms, 'How simple he is!' But now something dreadful existed in that simplicity which knew no sin—no sin at least of the deadly order; for we must bear in mind that Mr. Lane was now bound to regard iniquity from a theological point of view. On whichever side the truth may have reposed, Mr. Lane laboured painfully, and Dr. Phelps smiled curiously. And during this strange day, unique in the annals of Henry Phelps, while he was waiting to receive the penitent's confession, he philosophised on sin and on responsibility, and on what might constitute guilt in the heavenly courts. This man before him, this old and tried friend, had evidently sinned. He could not be a dreamer. He surely had committed some, if not many, of what their former schoolfellow, Key, would consider 'deadly sins.' Yet Dr. Phelps, 'for the life of him,' as we say, but really to save his own self-respect, could not kindle in his breast one spark of indignation against the offender. From which, reasoned out fully, and at great length and with great

perspicuity—for the Doctor was no addle-brained logician—he concluded that, as far as man's judgment could approach the Divine judgment, a man was not guilty before God, in relation to the breaches of the law committed by him; that is to say, not absolutely and unconditionally so. Yet this admission militated fiercely against his previous conclusions on this subject. Hitherto, if it had been possible to collect all the facts of whatever kind bearing on a crime, he would have undertaken to measure the criminal's guilt. And hitherto he had never doubted, and even now did not doubt, that his indignation would be in proportion to the malefactor's culpability.

With a half-morbid, half-honest perversity, Mr. Lane *would* believe that he was about to forfeit the esteem of the one man whose good opinion was to him in the place of a conscience. That he had been keeping the regard of Phelps for all these eight years by stealth, by a deliberate concealment of truth, he admitted to himself. The longer this fraud had lasted, the more base it had seemed to him. His own self-contempt on that account deepened in proportion to the sublimity of the trust which Phelps had reposed in him. Over this godlike man who had never sinned he had even assumed an air of superiority, had sometimes actually dared to speak and behave as if his own hidden baseness had placed him on a level of worldly wisdom above his friend.

In the ardour of youth, both loving alike what was noble, hating what was vile, yet feeling that in them, as in other souls which sought the light, there were possibilities of rambling into dark places, and of becoming at home in them, and finding the darkness to suit their dimmed eyesight,

these two lads had bound themselves together in a solemn compact. They would not fall from their heights. Obstacles might be reached which should impede their upward progress at this stage, or at the next, or the next. These might be overcome each in turn, or some one obstacle or another might prove insuperable. Certain moral summits might rear their heads inaccessible to the weary footsteps or the baffled spirits of these Titans; but fall from any level once attained to would they never. Hand-in-hand they stood strong in themselves, in each other, in that high and holy trust which all young men ought to have in celestial help, which can never have failed them yet. On the threshold of life—there they threw down the gauntlet to the powers of evil. 'We will do no base thing,' they said.

But they parted, and for one of them the powers which tend evil and animate its agents had proved too strong. They met him as he walked alone, overbold, and took up his gauntlet. He trusted too much in himself, and fell—fell from his early heaven down, down into a very abyss, a Gehenna of passion. And out of this he had crawled, with an *alias*, with closed lips, and a sullen brow, contracting swiftly and sullenly when one attempted to win his confidence, when one who was noble made generous attempts to encourage him to begin again to be noble by confessing his baseness and deploring it. This false pride, sullen, cowardly as it was, had bound his old iniquity up with his new righteousness, had made it part and parcel of his daily life for all these years, which otherwise had been fair enough since that one dark episode.

Mr. Lane's self-imposed isolation, though partly the result of a

habit both of mind and temper, was mainly traceable to this conviction. And this deep, dreary self-abasement which he thought humility, but which was so closely allied to pride, had preyed upon him and eaten into his very possibility of self-respect—that condition without which a man of true nobility, however humble in attainments, cannot be said to ‘live’ at all.

How little those who prattle with glib tongues or who write shallow phrases about suicide can have read the human heart! If they could trace, or would trace, the inner experiences of a deeply-tried man, how often they would see that the mere animal life has proved insupportable to one whose spirit was dead within him because he had lost some needful condition of its life! However this may be, Mr. Lane’s secret had pressed upon him with a crushing weight. The injury which he had unwillingly inflicted upon the girl whom he loved with a passion all the stronger for the restraint to which it was subjected seemed a natural consequence of the concealment which he had practised. His proper misery had driven him to tell more of his baseness to a priest than he had dared to tell to his friend; and the priest had told him candidly that his confession must go further to become complete. This he acknowledged, and resolved to avoid a new deception. But how was the confidence to be given now? When Phelps came uninvited Mr. Lane was in very deep waters. This oldest and best friend came trusting, though injured by exclusion from confidence. He came holding out a hand, and saying: ‘You are sinking under that heavy secret. I have watched you swimming bravely, have seen you baffling and baffled by the waves of sorrow. I want

to pull you ashore and to open that foul bag and cast its contents to the purifying winds of forgiveness, that we two may again walk hand-in-hand in the sunshine of friendship, still trustfully, as of old, but humbly because one of us fell, and his fall breaks our pride; for we are both men, brothers—nay, almost one man, so closely are our souls knit.’

As this generous affection on the part of Phelps unfolded itself clearly to Mr. Lane, he had no longer a wish to reject it, or to endeavour to retain it on false terms, only a deep regret that by doing so hitherto he had injured this guileless friend, and put him now at length to the pain of withdrawing his regard from one to whom he had so long given it. For still Mr. Lane dreaded the result of his disclosures. Without incriminating others, he could not even avail himself of the whole truth in his own defence. The task was a very hard one. Let the innocent only sneer at it! The more this guilty but conscientious man studied it, the less prepared with it he was. The New Year’s Day wore itself out, and a great part of the night, yet nothing had been said upon that subject on which it was understood that at length there was to be confidence between them.

In the long, dreary corridor outside the sitting-room door a forlorn old clock struck twelve. The strokes seemed interminably lengthened out, and the solemn sounds went echoing about the gloomy halls and passages. Then the silence was made audible by its sonorous ticking without, and within by the plaintive wail of a kettle on the hob, now parting with its last residue of water in a feeble wreath of vapour, anticipating a swift and fiery dissolution.

‘Did you think I was in love

with Eleanor as a boy?' asked Mr. Lane at length, speaking abruptly.

Dr. Phelps replied, 'Certainly.'

'But I was *not*,' Mr. Lane rejoined. 'I never saw that magic light on tree or bower, I never felt that glorious ecstasy called love, till quite lately. The object of my boyish passion was the place which you took from me at school.'

'From you?'

'Well, which you got, and I didn't get.'

'You did your best to get it,' observed Phelps, who desired chiefly to draw out his friend's natural characteristics, and to make him feel and speak on a topic too long shrouded with mystery.

'Yes,' Mr. Lane assented, 'I did my best, I drove furiously, and I wish the race were to come again.'

He glared defiance at the LL.D., and the latter glanced at him with kindling eyes and black, bristling moustache. But soon Mr. Lane's countenance fell, in contemplation of what was to come. Still, as a brave yet judicious general will avail himself of all natural and incidental advantages, so he fought from point to point in this dismal history. 'I drove furiously,' he repeated, 'but my horses fell lame. I was undergoing a fire of excitement, anger, and indignation, toward the finish, which you knew nothing about.'

'I have often thought so since,' the Doctor candidly replied. 'But come, fire away!'

'You remember my fight with Baily?' Mr. Lane continued, as if anxious to make the most of his past achievements.

Phelps nodded. His stiff black moustache projected, and his dark eyes twinkled with satisfaction.

'If I hadn't licked him,' continued Mr. Lane, 'I should never have had to confess any sins; for I should have gone away and hanged myself forthwith.'

'Happy dispatch,' suggested the Doctor. And Mr. Lane, grimly smiling, appeared to think that there might be a less satisfactory solution of certain difficulties than the whimsical custom to which his friend alluded.

'You know why I hated him?' the latter resumed.

Again Phelps nodded.

'Yes,' said Mr. Lane, seeing that his friend understood the case. 'Yes; the brute treated Eleanor badly. He has always behaved ill to every one but his father. *Ar-cades ambo*.'

'Still,' said the provokingly fair judge, 'I would put that to his credit. A good son must have a redeeming point.'

'Well,' Mr. Lane rejoined bitterly, 'the old dog and the young hound together have run me down with fidelity and tenacity of purpose, and, as far as my hereditary advantages went, have ruined me. But God forgive them! And as to my inheritances, let them go. But oh! I little knew how they were torturing *her* until just before the crisis. You know their house was the only home of my orphaned boyhood. As I grew older I gradually saw that George Baily had a secret power over her, to use in my absence, to conceal in my presence. I saw too that a restless devil within her goaded her always to fight him rather than let the strife languish. Indeed, when I was there she often had the best of it, for my presence stayed his hand. In that last Christmas holidays, before our final struggle in which you beat me so ignominiously, Eleanor and I were thrown much together; and to my surprise she clung to me as her natural protector, and spoke frequently of the Bailys (her father and brother, as I had till then believed) as her natural enemies. I had no clue to the interpretation of all this.'







RAPE OF THE GAMP

• Five minutes afterwards I was standing over the dead body of a tall, powerful man.



'Nor have I,' Dr. Phelps retorted.

But at this point of his narrative Mr. Lane regarded the expiring agonies of the tea-kettle with mute complacency.

'Come,' urged the Doctor; 'come, my boy. What was the clue to the secret of her domestic misery?'

'You once remarked an extraordinary resemblance between her eyes and forehead and mine,' Mr. Lane replied. 'Did it never occur to you to account for that likeness?'

'Never, I believe, till this moment,' Phelps answered, after a pause; 'but now it flashes across me like a half-remembered dream. Is it possible that she was not old Mr. Baily's daughter, not George Baily's sister, at all?'

'It is so.'

'And was she really Captain Lyte's daughter, and your own cousin?'

'Yes.'

Here a silence fell upon them both. Dr. Phelps was considering this strange discovery, and calculating how it might have influenced his friend's character and conduct. The latter was pausing because the farther he went the worse his story became.

'Go on, my boy,' said Phelps at length.

'I cannot.'

'You must, now.'

'Oh, the poor infatuated, ill-used, noble girl!' cried Mr. Lane, with a groan of unutterable anguish. 'Phelps, my best, oldest, truest friend! how can I tell you these horrors against my own flesh and blood, against my craven self, against my hateful, mad, proud, contemptible self? The poor girl loved me—yes, loved me; and now, at last, I know what love is, and how all else is nothing when opposed to it. Then I knew nothing

of love, But if you who saw us together thought I loved her, little wonder that she thought so too.

'You know I had the Civil Fund pension of £100 a year till I came of age. Well, when I found out the secret of Eleanor's parentage I wrote to my uncle and told him that I declined any further acquaintance with him, and that Eleanor herself had told me of his scheme for our marriage, to which I would never consent, even if abject poverty should stare me in the face.

'Then I went abroad, bidding Eleanor a very curt farewell, and thinking that she would now become her own father's heiress, and would soon abandon her foolish preference for me. I was overwrought and almost distraught with violent conflicts of emotion. My intention was to let my head rest and fatigue my body. I felt the want of a counsellor much at that time, and missed you dreadfully; but was sure that if I came to you, you would advise me to make peace with my uncle and accept Eleanor's affection, and those things I was utterly resolved not to do. The old hunters, Captain Lyte and Mr. Baily, had got me in the toils, and I was resolved to break loose and be my own master.

'After a few months' absence I wrote from Basle to Baily, asking him to draw and forward to me my half-year's pension, and to keep my address a secret, answering inquiries vaguely with a statement that I was travelling. That he hated me with a complimentary fervour I knew, but what more could he want (I thought) than what I had voluntarily sacrificed?

'The event proved. He sent the money safely enough; and the diligence which brought the mail brought Eleanor also to Basle. She had run away from a home

where she was hated, and thrown herself upon a man who could not love her.

'We did not go on into Switzerland, as my intention had been. My pension would terminate with the expiration of my twenty-first year, and it behoved me to put my shoulder to the wheel. We returned to the German Baths, merely to be within reach of some quiet central towns, one of which I resolved to select for our residence.'

Phelps was not slow to notice the change from 'I' to 'we' in the narrative, and beginning to be greatly agitated, he rose and commenced walking up and down the long, dimly-lighted room. But Mr. Lane, with eyes themselves fiery bright (could any one have seen them), sat still, reading the mysteries of the burning coals, and seeing in them phantom shapes, while in his ears rang cries from lips long silent. He remained thus silent for many minutes, and the Doctor's suspicions waxed stronger and stronger.

'Go on, Bedford,' he said bitterly—'go on. You wanted me to believe in the devil, and I am beginning to do so already.'

'The devil? Yes,' Mr. Lane replied bitterly. 'Who threw that poor ill-used girl in my path during our glorious boyhood, when

"many an old philosophy
On Argive heights divinely sang;
And round us all the thicket rang
To many a flute of Arcady?"

Why had I not a home like you, and like almost all other boys? Or, if my parents must die so early, out of the course of nature, why must I be sent to a hoary old knave in lieu of a parent, and left at the disposal of a brigand in the person of my nearest relative?"

"Knave" and "brigand" are

strong terms,' Dr. Phelps objected.

Then Mr. Lane told him the story of the double will: how Mr. Baily had induced General Lyte to execute a perfect will before his death, and afterward presented an imperfect previous draft of it to Captain Lyte as his father's only existing testament; how the Captain had set this imperfect will aside (knowing it at least virtually to be his father's last will), and had left the fortune of which he was lawfully only life-tenant away from the true heir, dividing it between his godchildren, Blanche and Janet Browne.

Yet the Doctor did not resume his gentle or sympathetic manner to this afflicted friend, but kept impatiently tramping to and fro, and urging Mr. Lane to 'go on, go on,' than which perhaps there are no two equally brief words as irritating and vexatious to a proud spirit.

'How am I to "go on," as you call it?' he asked, turning savagely upon his persecutor. 'How am I to *go on* if you are down upon me already like this, when, so far, I had been more sinned against than sinning? Pray what had I done to forfeit your esteem up to this point?'

'Then what do you mean by "We," after that poor girl arrived at Basle?' asked the Doctor, not sorry of an opportunity for bringing Mr. Lane to the point on this subject.

'I am just going to——' began the latter. Then suddenly turning on his friend fiercely, and flinging humility to the dogs, he exclaimed, 'Good God, man! You don't think I wronged my own kinswoman! How *dare* you?'

In no degree daunted the Doctor came closer, looked him calmly in the face, and said, 'Oh, I thank the Giver of all good for this

warmth of yours, my Bedford! Now I can bear whatever revelation is to come. But a terrible suspicion had taken hold of me. And I feared that my affection for you was going to be put to too severe a test. Forgive me.'

So in the midst of Mr. Lane's confession he was called upon to change places and exercise the virtue of charity toward his friend, and this gave him courage to proceed.

He went on to tell Phelps as delicately as possible that his cousin's love for him, and her reckless self-abandonment in throwing herself upon him as she had done, caused him terrible embarrassment; that, after one or two vain attempts to induce her to return to London, he had proposed to marry her as the only way in his power to save her reputation; that she had resisted him in this design; and that, setting down her opposition merely to an heroic unselfishness, he had carried his point, and actually made her his wife before they left Basle.

Now, it appeared, when, according to rule, they ought to have commenced being 'happy for ever after,' the terrible part of the narrative was to come, and we must let the luckless husband indicate his own sorrows.

'From Schlangenbad, a pretty village embowered in beech and maple woods, we were one day being driven to Schwallbach, when Eleanor showed symptoms of great uneasiness and distress. I could only account for this by the rude stare of a gallant who had just passed us in another open carriage, and whose eyes certainly had dwelt upon Eleanor for the moment of passing with a look both of recognition and surprise. However, I soon forgot the man and his impertinence, and when Eleanor implored me to take her

to Baden, had no suspicion that she would ever be annoyed by him again.

'We engaged apartments on the ground-floor of a secluded villa, which was unlike any other house in Baden. It had been built by an English lady, and had English grates and fenders in the lower rooms. There was also a front garden with railings in the English style. The public footpath skirts these railings, and is divided from the high road by the little river Oos. Rows of linden fringe both path and road.

'I had a notion that Karlsruhe or Stuttgart would suit us as a winter residence, and leaving Eleanor in charge of our good landlady (the person who rented the house), I went off with the intention of being absent three days. But being delighted with Karlsruhe, and wishing Eleanor to see it and help my decision, I returned on the second day.

'The sun had just set as I reached home. I was dusty and weary. I remember even now how dark and cool the little river looked as I turned from it and hastened across the grass-plot to our parlour window. A strange whim urged me to plunge into the stream and end my days by clinging to the roots of a tree under water. Not being either distinctly unhappy or apprehensive of evil, of course I shook off the whim. A startled scream answered my familiar three taps at the window, which, curiously enough, was shut, contrary to custom. Why did not Eleanor run to the window to greet me? Again, at the parlour door I was kept waiting, for it was bolted within, and my poor wife evidently hesitated before opening it.'

At this point of the narrative Mr. Lane sat staring into the fire without speaking, his teeth chat-

tering as if with cold, and Phelps could see drops of anguish glistening among the shaggy locks on his pale forehead.

'Skip over that, and tell me the sequel,' said Dr. Phelps, laying his hand affectionately on his friend's shoulder.

'Let me see,' Mr. Lane continued. 'Five minutes afterward I was standing over the dead body of a tall, powerful man, who must have been comely enough. Eleanor, or her shadow, stood by me wringing piteous hands. She had lost the power of speech from fright.'

'Was the man Balbry?' Phelps asked.

'Yes.'

'Were they really guilty?'

'Yes.'

'And is it his death which lies heaviest on your conscience?'

'No. I had broken her heart by my obstinate pride. She had flung herself away soon after I left England, and her coming after me to Basle was little more than a desperate rush to escape from him and see if I would not pity her.'

'Still,' urged the philosopher, 'you have been terribly punished by your own act in having married her. You had no censure to fear from me.'

Mr. Lane heard these last words without clearly comprehending them. Then, as if Phelps had asked him again for his own indictment, he said :

'She revealed the secret of her own birth to me in honour. I cast it in her face, broke off the marriage contract between us, and then left the country, leaving her surrounded with enemies. Her heart was broken, and I half suspect her brain was deranged.'

'Yet you married her after all. That should have healed her wounds and eased her mind.'

'It was too late,' Mr. Lane sadly answered.

'What and where is she now?'

'A Sister of the Black Veil in the convent of St. Agatha, at Ghent.'

'Sane?'

'Usually. But sometimes memory overpowers reason, and she fails for a time.'

So these two moralists seemed almost to overlook the fact that Mr. Lane had killed his rival. It had been done in the heat of anger, and was half accidental, as the baronet had fallen backward with his neck over the rim of an English fender, and Mr. Lane, having sprung at his throat, naturally fell forward upon him as he fell. The law of the duchy (Baden) took no cognisance of the accident, and it was vaguely reported that the baronet died from injury to the spine incurred by a heavy fall.

Yet it will appear in the sequel that Mr. Lane's expiation had to be wrought out with sighs, and self-restraint, and unremitting toil.

(To be continued.)





VIOLET.

WHEN leaves put forth their tenderest green,
 And all the groves are full of song—
 When insects in their brightest sheen
 Around the opening flow'rets throng—
 To Violets the Snowdrop yields,
 Proclaiming gentle Spring draws nigh ;
 And then, across Life's hallow'd fields,
 I follow blissful Memory.

Sweet Violet, thy winning face
 Recalls the spring-time of our love.
 A music in thy tones I trace
 Surpassing songsters of the grove.
 Recalls the kiss of plighted truth,
 When song-birds vied in melody
 To celebrate all Nature's youth,
 And our sweet vows of constancy.

DON GIOVANNI.

An imaginary Dialogue between Mozart and the Abbé da Ponte.

(FROM THE FRENCH OF OULIBISCHEFF.)

MOZART. Dear Abbé, I want a libretto; but this time, if you please, it must not be a French comedy. It is not for the court this time, nor for Vienna. I am writing for the people of Prague, who can appreciate me, and for their orchestra, which plays me at sight. There are also the best of actors and singers, and they will do what I tell them. In fact, it is as if Mozart were working for Mozart! We must surpass ourselves. But we want a good subject. What can you give me?

DA PONTE. You come at the right moment. Here is a story that I have in hand. It is taken from an old Spanish drama by Tirso de Molina, called 'The Stone Guest.' Molière and Goldoni have made comedies out of it; I want to shape it for an opera. But it is a strange piece of devilry, and no composer has yet attempted such a morsel. Perhaps you may not like it.

M. Let us hear it.

DA P. Firstly, there is an equestrian statue invited to supper, and which dismounts, because it would be rude to enter a dining-room on horseback. The statue will not eat anything, but preaches a very edifying sermon to the master of the house, who is a great rascal, and then carries him off below. I assure you that would be very fine. An actor smudged with chalk, with an earthenware helmet, white kid gloves, and complete Roman armour, made of old linen. (Mozart laughs.) Then we shall have phosphorus coming out of a trapdoor, and all sorts of devils. There is only one thing which

bothers me, I confess. It is the harangue to be put into the mouth of the statue; for although I flatter myself that I know my trade as well as any one, yet I am not quite a Shakespeare, to make spirits talk.

M. Never mind that. My orchestra shall make him speak, and clearly too. Capital! I am charmed with your statue. What next?

DA P. Next there is a young lady whose father has been killed in a duel by the *briccone*, who is the hero of the piece. The *signorina* cries and laments very reasonably, all the more because our rascal was very near committing—another crime. She vows vengeance. Till now all is prosperous for you, *caro maestro*, but now comes a difficulty. The young man betrothed to her, and to whom she commits the charge of vengeance, makes, it is true, loud promises at first, and he even draws his sword; but in the presence of the villain, who has the force and courage of a dozen, he calms down, and his sword slips back into the sheath. I confess this lover is a *pauvre sire*. He is always attached to the steps of his mistress, like a prolongation of her black train. But it is not possible to present him otherwise, and therefore, you see, all the lamentations of the signora, and her projects of vengeance, come to nothing.

M. (*becoming excited*). Yes; they produce the impossible; they hasten the justice of heaven; they wake the dead from their graves! It is the imperious cry of *vendetta* that will bring down the statue from its

pedestal. Abbé, I am enchanted with our *prima donna*; I would have chosen her from a thousand. As to her lover, he does not deserve your reproaches. How could you expect the *poverino* to cope with this incarnate fiend, who offers a glass of wine to the spectre of the man he has murdered? Why the one would have had the fate of the other, and we should have been left without a tenor, as in 'Figaro.' Precious advantage! *Caro amico*, you have no idea what such a man is—I mean our villain—but patience! When you shall see him on the stage, opposite the statue, courage in his eyes, irony and blasphemy on his lips, while the audience are trembling—when he exclaims, '*Parla! chi chiedi? chi vuoi?*'—then you will know him. No, no; a *briccone* of that sort is not to be punished by any living hand. The devil would be jealous. Body and soul, the devil must have all; therefore forgive the young man. He promises, he wishes, he even makes attempt; what more can a *prima donna* expect from a loyal tenor under such circumstances? His life is all within, I tell you; it is all in his love, which is vast and enduring. (*Looking at the MS.*) I see you make him swear by the eyes of his mistress, by the blood of her murdered father. Ah, what a duet!

DA P. Indeed, *maestro*, you are right. What a simpleton I am, not to have seen how clever I was! That is not often the case with me. But will you be equally pleased with the rest? Our *briccone* is a terrible devourer of women. He has already had *mille e tre* in Spain alone; and, besides, he has been a great traveller, this scoundrel. You understand that we cannot introduce all these women on the stage, but they need a representative, poor crea-

tures! I have taken one from Burgos, where our man flirted with her, and left her. Now this *Didona Abandonnata* cannot digest her disgrace. She hurries over mountains and valleys, inquiring for her faithless one from all whom she meets. At last she finds him. Instead of excusing himself, the *briccone* laughs in her face, and leaves her with his servant. She is made to wander about at night with this same valet, who is disguised in his master's mantle. Well, she persists still in loving her traitor, and when at length all hope of possessing him is gone, she tries at least to convert him. She is, in fact, out of her mind, between ourselves. I have thought she may amuse the gallery. You see she is good for nothing else.

M. The charming, adorable woman! Mad! do you say? Yes, in the eyes of you poets, who only regard the action of your characters and the words which you put, often without rhyme or reason, into their mouths. But we must look within the heart; and, after God, there is only the musician who can do that. Mad—fit to amuse the gallery! Make her say what you please. I will see that this noble and generous soul shall be reflected in my music as in a mirror; my friends shall see something very different from a maniac. (*He looks again at the MS.*) Ah, she comes to his last banquet! She beseeches him to have pity on himself! How adorable! It is the voice of the guardian angel making itself heard before that of the judge. (*After a moment's thought.*) Besides, this active and passionate character is a necessary link between the other personages, of whom two at least have a merely passive rôle. She will furnish us with trios, quartets, perhaps even

a *sestetto* if we have sufficient material. I have a hankering for a *sestetto* ever since we tried one in 'Figaro,' although there the lyric matter was poor enough. How strange, my excellent friend, the better you work, the less you are aware of it!

DA P. (*Modestly simpering*). Perhaps so. As to a *sestetto*, there will be ample room for one. I have not come to the end of my characters—here is one that will please you. It is a newly-married peasant-girl, simple, tender in appearance, but somewhat of a coquette, and even a little more, as you will see. Well, then, our villain meets her returning with the bridal procession. He is a connoisseur, the rascal, to do him justice, and he always has some new ruse at command. In a moment he has got rid of the marriage guests, and even of the husband, who is a mere *Mazetto*. The poor Zerlina (that is her name) is just on the point of—well, she is saved by the appearance of *Didona Abandonnata*, who comes on the scene at a most opportune moment. Then, at length, the husband, *Mazetto* as he is, gets angry, and tries to avenge himself; but unfortunately, through a trick of the *briccone*, instead of bestowing a thrashing, he receives one. *Mazetto* roars vigorously. The little wife, hearing his cries, comes to his aid, and examines the bruises which her dear husband has received from the stock of his own pistol. Never mind! You remember, *maestro*, that the night is that of their marriage. Ha, ha! Perhaps the situation is such that a poet of my profession ought not to have approached it; but you see I have sacrificed myself for love of you, and so I have written just a little bit of a *cavatina*. . . .

M. Let us look. (*He reads.*) 'Vedrai carino' H'm! Well,

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that was all *you* could do, my friend; but *my* task is different. It is to paint in music the supreme moment of the heart and of life. Another poet might have tried to express this, and would have spoiled all; but you, whom I love as the apple of my eye—you, my faithful *Pylades*—you who are the true poet for a composer—you leave all to me; you take my hand, and place it on a young heart palpitating with love, and you say, '*Senti lo battere.*' Yes, it is for me to feel it, and to make it felt. There shall be all the delights of love in my *cavatina*; it shall be burning and yet chaste, in spite of the words. The words are the language of the peasant-girl, and they are suited to her; the music shall be her soul, the soul of Mozart when he was united to Costanza. Do you know, Abbé, that I am already in love with our Zerlina?

DA P. (*a little disconcerted*). I was sure she would please you.

M. (*after a little thought*). But stay. What sort of work is this we are setting about? It will not be an *opera seria*, apparently. The villain who devours so many women, *Didona Abandonnata*, who is laughed at so much, the bumpkin who is deceived and thrashed, the statue which accepts an invitation to supper—all this is a great way from the heroic class. In fact, our only tragic characters are the daughter of the Commander and her lover; and these—even these—your illustrious predecessor, Signor Metastasio, would have dismissed with contempt, as being neither Greeks nor Romans, kings or princesses. On the other hand, a piece ending with the death of the principal character cannot be called comic. What is it then?

DA P. (*somewhat tartly*). *Corpo di Bacco!* Am I a simpleton, to make a serious opera from such

materials? I intend it as a *dramma giocoso*; and, certainly, the comic element is not totally wanting, I venture to think, in what I have had the honour to submit to you. But you take things in such a style. . . .

M. Don't let us be angry. Am I not *contentissimo* with everything? Be it what you like; the title is indifferent. When we are gone, perhaps people will give it some other. But what I want is, that all possible contrasts be united. All the colours must be bold and bright. The follies must not be *paler* than the vices, nor the love less fierce than the revenge; otherwise everything will be overshadowed and, as it were, annihilated by the last character, Death. Oh, it is so good to laugh! Now, in 'Figaro,' I only smiled with the end of my lips; here I want to laugh with all my body; but still I have not a proper subject. You know my opinion as to your *Didona*; and Mazetto may amuse by his *rôle*, but does not yield much to the partition. Now, is there any one else? Ah, you smile!

DA P. (*chuckling*). I see; I must needs disclose now what I meant to reveal only at the very last, by way of an agreeable surprise. Yes, *caro amico*, we have a buffoon *ex officio*; and I consent to forfeit my place as poet attached to the Imperial Court—nay, more, to renounce my character of Italian and become a *Tedesco*, in all the truth of the word and the dullness of the thing, if this buffoon of mine does not suit your taste!

M. I don't doubt it. You Italians are the first men in the world for that.

DA P. You Italians! And what may you be, O composer of the 'Marriage of Figaro'?

M. I flatter myself that I resemble you in some points, but not in all.

DA P. Do you pretend to be more than an Italian in music?

M. We will talk of that after our work is done. At present, I want to know your buffoon; and if he is worth the trouble, I will try to be as much a countryman of yours as possible.

DA P. Ah! Paisiello would give me anything for him. Judge for yourself. Our buffoon is the valet, secretary, intendant, and general factotum of the *briccone*. Now, this is not a case by any means of 'like master, like man.' This one resembles his master like a well-drilled monkey might have imitated Lucifer before that fallen angel had assumed the horns and hoofs. Morally, he is a coward, a glutton, and a busybody; in other respects, the best of mortals. He sincerely blames the conduct of his master; he pities from the bottom of his soul the poor fluttering birds who are caught by his springs and nets; but yet this sport, in which he is perfectly disinterested, diverts him so much that he cannot help aiding the fowler with all his efforts. Every day he curses the fatigues, fasts, and dangers to which his master's adventures expose him; every day he gives warning; and yet every day his stupid curiosity, a sort of vulgar love of adventure, and, more than all, his attachment to his master, who appears to him a great rascal and an admirable hero—all these motives force him, in spite of himself, into the worst courses. Wherever there are blows to be received, there you find him; but he gets off wonderfully, the rogue, and is as slippery as an eel, just when all seems lost. In short, he is a compound of good-nature and malicious gaiety, cowardice and rashness, clumsy imitation and chance skill, of natural stupidity and borrowed wit. Well,

what do you say? Is not that a masterpiece?

M. It is, it is! and the only character you have thoroughly comprehended. I only have to lay on the colours, and in this case shall be happy if I carry out your design.

DA P. I forgot to tell you that this fellow is editor of a journal, to which his master is the chief contributor. This is a scandalous chronicle, if ever there was one. Here we find dates and localities, Christian and surnames, age, figure, complexion, and all possible description of the beauties whom the *padron* has honoured with his attentions. And the editor is sufficiently proud of it. He inflicts it upon everybody, whether they will or no. And to whom, do you think, does he read it at last? Why, to none other than *Didona Abandonnata*, who is waiting for some little explanations. He thinks nothing will console like a work in which she is heroine of a chapter. Is not the idea comic?

M. Comic, perhaps, but cruel. I will intercede, however, with the audience to pardon you this pleasantry. And it may be pardoned; for *Didona* is a personage so completely sacrificed in all dramatic respects, that one injury more or less cannot affect her, poor woman! It is but one more burning coal for the head of the *briccone*. We cannot have too many complaints against him, in order to justify the ending. But, *à propos*, in how many acts is your story?

DA P. In two, of the length of four.

M. What shall we have for our first *finale*? I should like something grand, with room for choruses and much scenic movement.

DA P. Don't be alarmed; you shall be more than satisfied. You shall have a splendid *fête*, to which the *briccone* invites all the world.

You will have villagers and nobles, masquers, a ball, music—in fact, a grand display. Our villain, of course, has a wicked plan in his head; his valet is helping him with all his powers; others are planning vengeance; the crowd is dancing or feasting, including Mazetto, who is made to dance, although his heart is not with the violins. Suddenly a piercing shriek is heard from an adjoining room. What can it be? People look round, and remark that the young bride is missing, and the *briccone* also! Ah, the rascal, the traitor! You understand. There is an uproar, the door is broken open, and enter the *briccone*, sword in hand, dragging his valet by the hair. 'Here is the culprit!' This shallow ruse does not deceive the throng. He is surrounded, threatened, almost abashed, for the first time in his life. A hundred staves are brandished over his head, the tenor absolutely lays his hand on the hilt of his sword, the women scream like geese when the ganders are at strife, the musicians leap over their fallen desks and escape—a storm outside adds to the noise and uproar. Then at length our *briccone* recovers his spirits. He rolls his eyes like a tiger—he scatters the crowd by the sight of his shining sword; they all give way, and he passes through them without receiving a scratch, and, uttering an infernal laugh, he disappears. The curtain falls—applaud!

M. (in a transport of joy, embracing the *Abbé* repeatedly). Friend, brother, benefactor! what god or demon has inspired thy poor poet's head with this? Know'st thou that the world will owe thee a monument for this *finale*? (calming down). But say no more; now I know my affair better even than you. *Siete un gran'uomo!* You place the musician in a terrible strait; but never has more glo-

rious operatic subject come out of the head of an artist in rhymed phrases. Let me embrace you once more, *mio carissimo*, and let me thank you in the name of all the faculty of composers, singers, instrumentalists, and dilettanti, *nunc et in sæcula sæculorum!*

DA P. (*much flattered*). Oh, oh, *troppo di bontà, caro maestro!* Spare my modesty! So, if I am to believe you, I have really produced a masterpiece?

M. Without doubt; you, or MOZART'S DESTINY! Now, all we have to do is to arrange the concerted pieces. You will receive from me,

as for 'Figaro,' the most detailed and precise instructions. I shall also furnish you with a sketch of the airs which are to characterise the personages, as *I* understand them. As to the action, there is nothing to be altered.

DA P. My rule, compasses, and file are at your service, and I will say all that you wish. You think, then, that our opera will go *alle stelle?*

M. I don't know; but I think that, sooner or later, 'Il Don Giovanni, ossia il diaboluto punito,' will make some noise in the world.

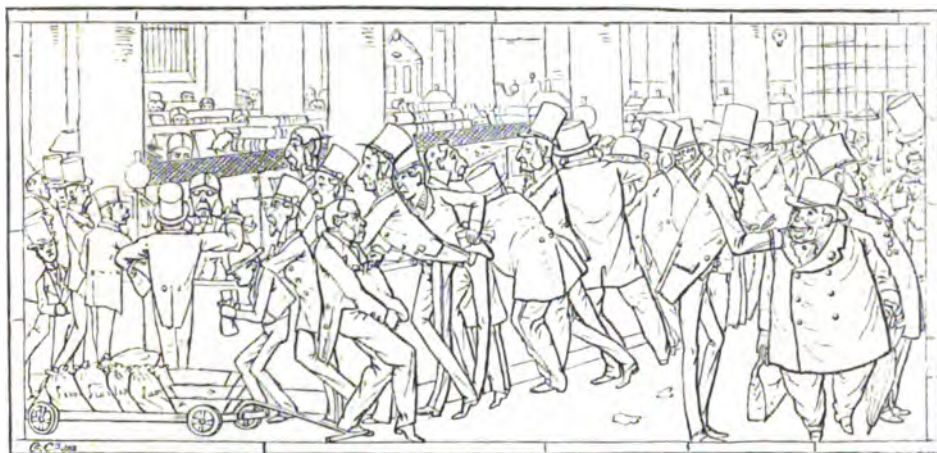
J. DE S.





C. H. STANLEY JAR

WEST END.



EAST END.



GOSSIP HONEYMAN.

II.—ON CADS.

I AM not a 'good hater,' I frankly admit the 'soft impeachment,' Dr. Johnson's apothegmatic approval of good haters notwithstanding. The indulgence of hatred against one's fellow imperfections I look upon as so much sheer waste of sensational energy—the game is not worth the candle.' If it gave one any real comfort, perhaps—but it does not, and cannot. In a large percentage of cases, I take it that hatreds spring from causes more or less discreditable to the haters; in other words, I suspect that people less often hate for what has been done to them than for what they have done to the persons hated.

'It is the wit, the policy of sin,
To hate those men we have abus'd,'

says Sir William D'Avenant, and I agree with him. The best that can be said of hatred is, that it is an ordered and formulated species of malevolence, in the prosecution of which the hater is as likely to do himself as much harm as, doing his worst, he is likely to do to the person he hates. Now, as a matter of speculation, I do not see the advantage, or even the 'fun,' of cutting off one's nose to spite somebody else's face. I should, of a surety, strongly counsel any dear friend or belonging of mine, whose well-doing I desired to promote, not to commit himself to any such illogical and uneconomical sacrifice; urging him by all means to bear in mind, even 'in the very torrent, tempest, and (as I may say with Shakespeare) whirlwind' of his passion—indeed, most particularly at such a time—that, considering the general importance

of his nasal feature, there are few occasions in life upon which a man could conscientiously determine to divest himself of that organ, or ostensible servant of many organs. Put in that way, I flatter myself my argument would possibly carry conviction with it into the mind of even a far-committed hater. But there is another way of putting the matter, in the form of a demonstrable fact, an irrefragable conviction—that a nose which has once been, voluntarily or involuntarily, severed from its natural and peaceful alliance with a man's face, can never, by any force of after regret or later reasoning, be restored to it, at least in its integrity, giving to science the utmost denier of its due.

Need I say I do not here pretend to expound the higher morality of this question?—not for a moment. That, I take it, is the work of the great preachers and teachers; and I am not, 'God wot,' a preacher, and I do not aspire to be a teacher, but only a companionable *cicerone*-sort of commentator on the wayside things of life—with this great advantage over *ciceroni* in general, that I know how to listen as well as talk. Whenever the higher moralities are in question, and a big speaker pronounces what it is right and lawful for us to do under this or that perplexing circumstance, or treble entanglement of perplexing circumstances, he will always find me his most attentive auditor; never thinking of opening my lips, except, perhaps, on some rare occasion, to say a something which, absorbed in the larger interests of his theme, he may have forgotten,

or thought it not within his province to say. Having in almost all the relations of *my* daily life to deal face to face with the practical and more or less directly obvious, I am, as it were, under compulsion to give the most practical answers I can shape to meet the questions put to me, or which I am impelled from within to take up—as ‘when the cap fits.’ I should, therefore, tell a man, whom I imagined the advice might benefit, that it would certainly ‘not pay him’ to cut off his nose to spite his own or anybody else’s face, not as embodying a high principle of morality, but rather such a principle as might the more timously appeal to the quality of his apprehension. I hold, besides, that a man may do very many worse things than preserve his nose, even upon a principle so low and commonplace as that of calculated self-interest. It strikes me that, in this bustling life we are for the present leading, we cannot afford to chop logic too frequently on the subject of our own or other people’s motives. I feel sure it would lead to infinite inconvenience if we were habitually to decline to countenance the ‘right thing’ when it is done, because the motives under which it has been done are—as we understand them—not quite or entirely to our liking. I admit that I know I am here giving encouragement to the practice of compromise. I admit it, but I do not glory in it. I only adduce, in support of my view, the fact that the interests of life so cross and re-cross, tread so closely upon one another, overbear and underbear each other so incessantly and inexplicably, that ‘give and take’ appears to me to have become, if not the highest, at least the most commodious law under which existence can be carried on on this planet—I do not venture to form an opinion as to the pro-

bable ‘state of things’ in the planet Mars.

And to this profession please allow me to add another—namely, that I hold there are some principles that admit of no compromise; for which the cross and the stake are the only alternatives to fulfilment. Thank heaven, our faith is rarely put to any such test. I say this confidently, and intentionally in the teeth of Grimchin, who, with his high, red cheek-bones, limp and frowsy-looking yellow-white ‘choker,’ and livery of greasy black, holds forth at me at street-corners on summer Sundays, and insists—in the worst possible taste, and with grammatically corresponding—that such principles challenge my instant decision every hour of my specially sinful life, on pain of—he only and his magpie likes know what impossible penalties. How strongly I am tempted sometimes to pitch him from his stool, and *ex cathedra* give him a ‘bit of my mind!’—to tell him (of course in the vague hope of somehow succeeding in penetrating the thickness of his dense skull, and of letting a gleam of wholesome light into the fog-hollow of his intelligence) what a shallow and impertinent bungler he is, and how little he knows of the ways and will of the Divine Master, whose divinity he profanes at every second ill-pronounced word he speaks. But, of course, that is out of the question. So long as the police do not make him ‘move on,’ Grimchin is in his right to get a crowd about him, and to pervert, and vulgarise, and horribly burlesque, to his flaccid heart’s content, ‘the word’ of Him whom grand old Dekkar thought it no impiety—nor was it—to describe as—

‘The best of men
That e’er wore earth about him was a
sufferer;

A soft, meek, patient, humble, tranquil spirit;
The first true gentleman that ever
breath'd.'

What can Grimochin know of the soul of a 'true gentleman?' I answer, 'Nothing,' and thence, by my own premise, am bound to conclude that he knows nothing of Him whose human charity he unctuously belies, as he misinterprets the Gospel of His lips, while vain-gloriously affecting to expound it. Contemptible and ill-conditioned thing, get out of my sight! I know not precisely why I suffered myself to take even a passing heed of you; for, though my mind was bent upon the contemplation of some things men hold in hatred, I by no means hold you as worthy to inspire so great a commotion in any one's spirit as hate must give rise to. Even though I would willingly take the trouble upon myself of flinging or kicking you into the nethermost limbo of unrecoverable forgottenness, as being of no earthly service in the world, but, for the most part by far, rather a something of condition altogether so *malesain* as to be better got rid of and done with for ever, the worst provocation you can give me will never be of a kind to engender in me more than, perhaps, a temporary access of indignation tempered with disgust. It needs a stronger lever than a Grimochin will ever be able to exert to set the mechanism of hatred in motion within me.

It is very difficult, in fact, to provoke me to hatred at all; and, when sufficiently provoked, I am conscious, as I have already admitted, of being anything but a 'good hater.' Individual hatreds I have none, though I believe I could catalogue as respectable a list of individuals disliked, despised, detested, as the most well-meaning and charitably-disposed

fellow-sufferer and sinner within the bounds of Her Most Gracious Majesty's dominions, on which the sun is said never to set. But I have my hatreds as well as my betters, if I do not make so much of them. Upon the whole, I fancy the cad comes in for the best part of my hatred. As to some other of my hatreds, there may be moments when I may waver in my impressions as to the thoroughness of my evil disposition; but, as regards the cad, I have not felt a moment's doubt in this respect. No: I am morally certain that I hate him with all the malignity it has been my fortune to acquire from the combined generosity of nature and education. He is my *bête noire*—he delights to obtrude himself upon my notice, more especially at the most unseasonable times, and, by so doing, acts as a constant outrage against my most treasured feelings. At church, at the theatre, abroad, at home, he is ever near, ever treading on my toes, and on those of others more cared for by me than my own, never dreaming of apology; on the contrary, the more satisfied with himself and his doings, the greater has been the discomfort he has been able to effect. I can laugh at a snob, or pity him; but the thorough cad excites my most intense abhorrence, and I can never—will never—show him either toleration or mercy. The snob has his excuses; he aspires to be thought something more—and that something generally better and more estimable—than he is. The cad's pretension is exactly the reverse; his emulation tends downwards; his ambition is to appear a greater fool than he is, and especially to mark himself for distinction as an educated blackguard. Born, we will say, to a coronet, it is his strangely-prompted pleasure to cultivate, as a second education,

the manners and morals of Coventry Street, and the taste and language of Whitechapel. He reads the grand motto of this caste, *No-bleesse oblige*, as the devil is said to quote Scripture, only to make it say the thing it does not say. The sole obligation he acknowledges as due from him to his *noblesse* is doing nothing which can by any possibility be mistaken for vulgar usefulness. He has taught himself, or had himself taught, that the proper end and aim of a young nobleman's life is to be—a cad.

I am naturally led to this conclusion from observing the assiduity—I had almost said eagerness, and I am not sure it is not 'quite the most' appropriate word—with which he seeks to qualify himself to take a foremost place in the *demi-monde* of caddism. I might sometimes be inclined to congratulate myself on not having come into the world while the 'young bloods' of whom I read, and who were so much in the minds of the generations in which they had their not-to-be-respected existence; but that I feel too well assured that I am here living in the midst of a yet more scandalous development of noble degradation. The cad of to-day might really, it seems to me, be the natural offspring of the valets of the 'bloods' of eighty or a hundred years ago, who notoriously 'bettered' the bad example set them by their masters, and vulgarised, while they mimicked and multiplied, their vices. As far as I can discover, there is no possible apology for the cad as he now delights to pose himself. The 'young blood' sinned with a certain dash and courage, that won for him a relaxation of the censure honest men were bound to pass upon him in their day; but what dash or courage does the cad now display to induce us to think twice before condemning him? Dash!

—he is the dullest, even when he is the noisiest, fool in a crowd of fools. Courage!—to insult an unprotected girl, or, if still supported by brother cads, to maltreat a policeman. These are the strongest claims, as far as I can discover, that the cad ever advances in those directions.

Born to a coronet, I have said, because my hatred is concentrated on the cad of cads—on the being endowed by fortune with all earthly advantages for doing the best, and who yet, out of sheer perversity, chooses to do the worst. I hate him the more intensely, because it is in the very nature of things that *his* example should have an *entrain* of the best or most pernicious kind.

'Actions of kings are precepts; what they do
Seem to be precedents, and warrants too.'

as an old poet wisely says. If the source is befouled, the stream does not escape pollution; and the muddy stream of caddism flows downwards through very low levels indeed, whither at the moment I feel no inclination to follow it. Not that I have yet nearly done with my irritator or his doings. I have still a rod for him, which I have very carefully prepared in a pickle of approved efficacy—a rod which I design to lay to him with healthy insistence, wriggle and writhe under it as he may. My only care in the matter will be given to my own feelings. I shall not regard *his* feelings one jot—why should I? I hate him, and I wish to do him an injury if I can. How I shall try to accomplish my malignant purpose is, by publishing his portrait and that of his double, so that no doubt shall afterwards exist as to his identity; and I shall at the same time suggest what I consider to be the best

method of dealing with him, when- semblance of a story, to which
 ever he is met with in particularly I shall give the significant title
 'full feather.' As thus: in the of

THE CAD-QUELLER.

A leash of cads rampant went forth one fine day,
 Cad-life to enjoy in the most caddish way—
 That is, to do most things which two young men shouldn't,
 Especially most things two gentlemen wouldn't.
 Both stunted in stature, both feeble of brain,
 Both awkward and ugly—but not the less vain :
 Both sallow and sharp-jawed and insolent-eyed,
 Both swag'ring and noisy, and blatant with pride
 Of their mean little bodies and starv'ling wits,
 And contempt of all else—as the cad befits.
 They were strangely alike—as alike as two peas—
 More nearly alike than the twin Siamese ;
 In short, each one look'd like the other one's brother,
 Except that each look'd more a cad than the other—
 As if his worst trait each had sought to enhance,
 Aspiring to rival the 'unrivalled Vance'
 In—what shall I call his most exquisite rôle ?—
 His fam'd 'Champagne Charlie,' perhaps, on the whole.
 Their hats were of shapes that cads only would choose,
 They had loud-pattern'd stockings and bright-buckl'd shoes ;
 They had wide-bottom'd trousers and slangy-cut coats,
 And 'Formosa collars' encircled their throats ;
 They had rainbow-hued neckties with horsey big pins—
 Their watch-chains seem'd almost to threaten their shins !
 They had gloves of full colour and large-sized cigars,
 And sticks of the sort sold at Ramsgate bazaars.
 Their dress was perfection, in fact—of its kind,
 Which I think the worst kind the worst taste could find.
 Of course I admit, if his tastes were *not* bad,
 A fellow might utterly fail as a cad ;
 He can only achieve what a *cad* can do—
 He can't be a blackguard and gentleman too.
 Thus, measur'd by proper cad-standards, I'm clear
 Two more complete cads you'd not meet in a year.

Now it happened uncommonly ill for the pair,
 A GENTLEMAN that day was taking the air ;
 A tall, handsome, thoughtful-eyed, brave-carriaged man,
 Whose features a woman might pleasantly scan,
 And there, in a moment, as if in a book,
 Read honour and manfulness stamp'd in each look :
 In brief, he had what I think manhood's first charms—
 A large, tender heart—and a strong pair of arms.
 Well, cads were his special abhorrence ; they rous'd
 Within him whatever of anger was hous'd,
 And made him, though outwardly calm he appear'd,
 A foe that cads not wholly fools would have fear'd.
 But those I've described were as foolish as any,
 And only a little more vicious than many ;
 So, onward they swagger'd, loud, shameless, elate,
 While each step was dogged by—a *muscular Fate* !
 There's no need each separate deed to rehearse
 Of shameless behaviour—bad growing to worse :

Of women indignant, girls pale with affright—
 What more could cads wish for to give them delight?
 Their walk is a triumph!—a path strewn with roses!—
 For nobody kicks them, or wrings off their noses.
 A drowsy policeman, who 'sees how things is,'
 Yawns twice and decides 'taint no bisness of *his* ;'
 Then turns his official attention once more
 To drowsing—and noticing less than before.
 And so the detestable pair go their way,
 And think themselves truly 'great creatures' that day :
 Wrapp'd up in himself, neither sees, hears, nor feels
 The *muscular Fate* that is close at his heels!

Cads flourish in some places better by far
 Than in others ; they love a 'Refreshment Bar,'
 With girls they think placed there expressly to be
 At receipt of their infamous *badinerie*.
 To one of these places, then, *my* cads repair,
 Their charms to disport and their rank wits to air.
 They find but one girl in attendance, which suits
 Their humour precisely—the foul little brutes !
 She cannot escape them ; they've nothing to fear—
 For 'only a slow-looking party' is near.
 So, bravely they 'chaff' her and say such vile things—
 The least vile a blush to her young forehead brings ;
 Till, goaded to fierce indignation, she cries,
 'You both deserve thrashing !' Then, to their surprise,
 The 'slow-looking party' straight up to them goes,
 And tightly takes hold of each one by the nose !
 'You'll beg this girl's pardon—or out of the shop
 I shall kick you !' he says. Then both swear. He cries 'Stop !'
 And, if you've a fraction of sense, be appall'd !—
 I bear a surname of ill-omen ; I'm call'd
 "The Queller of Cads !"—'tis a title I've won—
 And I wear it with pride—for *some things I have done !*
 It happened that, even when I was a lad,
 Of all human vermin I hated a cad ;
 And stronger and stronger the feeling has grown,
 For I've carefully nurs'd it and train'd it, I own,
 Till now it's become quite a passion—a rage—
 And war to the knife 'gainst cads rampant I wage !
 Take warning, then, both of you, if you would guard
 Your skins from disaster—I *kick very hard !*—
 And sorely I'm tempted with kicks to repay
 The insults you've offer'd to women to-day.
 I've follow'd you closely, and seen all you've done,
 And danger of kicking you've twenty times run !
 The women and girls you insult in the street
 Protection may claim from each passer they meet ;
 None claim'd my protection, and therefore together
 I left you to run the full length of your tether :
 You've run it, and come to its cowardly end,
 Insulting a girl you thought none would befriend.
 Now, precisely because she stands here at receipt
 Of every insult you cads think it meet,
 With infamous gusto, to pour in her ears,
 Your vileness, to my mind, most flagrant appears.
 Apologize to her I'm quite sure you won't—
 Be equally sure you'll be kick'd if you don't !

The strength owned between them was scarcely a tithe
 Of that which restrain'd them. 'Twas useless to writhe ;
 'Twas painful besides—as they found once or twice—
 To noses when held with the grip of a vice.
 A gentleman frankly admits he's done ill,
 A thing a cad never by any chance will ;
 So neither would these cads, though held by the nose,
 And threaten'd with kicking they could not oppose.
 They trusted to 'bouncing' : the kicking began—
 And went on—for such was the Cad-Queller's plan.
 They struggled, they wriggled, they threaten'd, they swore—
 Which only provok'd him to kick them the more.
 He kick'd them severely—a long time, I'm sure,
 And made them, / fancy, a great deal endure ;
 Till, finally, lifting them both ' off their feet,'
 He flung them, like refuse, out into the street.
 Once free, they fled wildly—not daring to wait
 A second, for fear of that *muscular Fate!*

To cure a cad rampant completely of vice
 One kicking, I reckon, will rarely suffice ;
 But though my Cad-Queller look'd out for the twain,
 He never by any chance met them again.
 From which I infer that, at least in degree,
 Those two cads were quell'd—as may all the rest be.

The moral I wish to inculcate
 by means of that 'simple story' is
 this : that there is but one certain
 way of quieting a thorough-blown
 cad ; he must be mastered and
 cowed. Short of that, I do not
 believe there is any way under the
 sun of keeping him within bounds.
 You cannot touch his reason, be-
 cause, in cultivating the qualities
 requisite to make him a cad, he
 has necessarily divested himself of
 that distinctive faculty ; and you

cannot put him to shame, because
 the very crown of his ambition is
 the doing of utterly shameless
 things. No ; there is but one me-
 thod of treatment before which he
 must cry *peccavi* : he must be
 made to give way to the *force*
majeur of a sound thrashing—al-
 ways supposing that it is sound
 enough, which it should never fail
 of being if I had the counting of
 the lashes laid on to him.



‘EXCHANGE NO ROBBERY.’

EVENING; a soft, balmy evening in Brighton; a gentle breeze wafting Gungl’s dreamy ‘Soldaten Lieder’ from the pier-head to the shore; a broad, silvery stream of moonlight dancing on the calm sea, to meet the ripples breaking on the beach; a confused murmur, broken by peals of laughter, encircling the band; and far from the brilliant lights, the music and the voices, two people standing in the shadow—man and woman, yet not lovers, nor husband and wife.

He is resting his elbows on the side of the pier, staring fixedly at the moon’s bright rays, and pertinaciously smoking; she, standing near him, looks up with a face white and contracted by pain, although no tremble is audible in the almost harsh, yet steady voice in which she addresses him.

‘Have I explained it now, Hubert? Do you understand me?’

‘I suppose so,’ still sullen and immovable.

‘But please do not suppose only. Do you perfectly fathom my motives?’

‘Well, to give a plain answer to a very plain question, I can’t say that I do,’ he answers, in a coolly aggravating tone, as he strikes a fuzee, and lights a fresh cigar.

‘Oh, must I tell you it again?’ she exclaims, wearily, at having to reiterate the words it has been pain to say once; ‘must I tell you again that I at last perceive—what I have been mad not to see before—that you no longer care for me, that you hanker after the society of a girl, prettier, more fascinating than I, a girl, double my age, and therefore, I suppose, better able to share your tastes and sympathise with your woes.’

‘Come now, Muriel,’ he says,

soothingly, ‘don’t be so spiteful. If, in your alleged wrongs, you are alluding to your cousin, she is only three-and-twenty, and twice eighteen make more than that; you must at least acknowledge so much. But don’t conjure up evils for yourself, my dear. You know I have never suggested any rupture of this kind. Forget it, Muriel, and be sensible.’

‘Forget it!’ she echoes scornfully, as she tosses his hand from her shoulder, and the hot blood mounts to her face and suffuses her pale cheeks with indignation, ‘do you imagine that my nature is as callous as your own? Do you expect me to keep my vows to a man who openly shows his preference for another, who is indifferent, inconstant to me, and, when accused, offers no denial of his fickleness? Here, Hubert,’ she says rapidly, pulling a broad gold band off her finger, ‘you may have this back. It is useless to me now.’

He does not turn to take the proffered ring.

‘What am I to do with this thing?’ she asks, impatiently, holding it out on the palm of her hand. ‘You had better take it back. You might pop it, you know,’ she adds, with a bitter laugh, ‘and get a fresh one for—’

‘I don’t want it,’ he interrupts; ‘throw it away.’

‘Very well,’ and Muriel Gaythorne quietly drops her betrothal pledge into the sea; and its noiseless disappearance is but an emblem of the dull, aching pain which deadens her poor bruised heart, and threatens to destroy all her young energy, and embitter her life by cancelling the last link which has bound her to Hubert Vyner for more than two years.

'By Jove! Muriel,' he exclaims, as he expresses his astonishment by a long, low whistle.

'Perhaps you understand, now, what I mean?' she repeats, slowly.

'Do you really mean what you say? Am I to take you at your word, Muriel?'

'Yes, of course. It is nonsense to suppose that we can ever meet again as we have done, or on the same footing. We may be friends, or acquaintances, or whatever you like to call it; but not what we *have been*;' and only a slight falter in her voice betrays her suppressed emotion, although she has to summon all her will and injured pride to aid her in restraining the hot tears which, withheld from their natural course, sear her brains like hot irons.

'Come then,' he says, with a pseudo-nonchalant air, and offering her his arm, 'let me take you back to your friends.'

'No, thank you. I shall join them presently. I am very well here by myself.'

'Good-bye then.' He holds out his hand; but Muriel does not see the action, nor heed his farewell, so he turns away, not without a pang of remorse, as he sees the girlish figure leaning against the rail in an attitude of utter despair, which his conscience tells him has been caused by his wanton infidelity, and he leaves Muriel Gaythorne alone—alone, indeed, without his love—gazing into the dark-blue depths of the sea, and yearning, in the first madness of her sorrow, to end all her troubles on its broad, inviting bosom.

* * * * *

Christmas time at Rymer Lodge.

Mrs. Benfield has filled her house with those friends whose annual custom it is to spend this season with her.

She is a widow; neither 'fat,

fair,' nor 'forty,' but petite, dark, and thirty. Her husband was old, and removed himself to better spheres at an early period of their married life, having first providentially secured a handsome fortune to his widow, who was so little grieved by the timely demise of her poor dear first, and so nagged and worried by him before his celestial flight, that she has not deemed it prudent to put in a second venture into the lottery of marriage. So rich, pretty, and not over-wise Mrs. Benfield, whose wealth is the golden bait many have snapped at, remains a most agreeable hostess, and is to all men the same.

The greater number of her guests are unmarried men and women, with the exception of one or two old couples, whose belief in the all-powerful attractions of their daughters is so great, that they follow the unfortunate girls wherever they go, as a sort of guard of honour. But Mrs. Benfield is no match-maker. If any love-lorn maiden is so unwary as to entrust her secret to her, with a view to gaining advice and sympathy, her hopes are rudely shattered by the widow's never-failing retort of 'Take my advice, my dear! Never put your head in the noose. Have fifty lovers, if you like, but no husband;' which is but meagre consolation to the girl who is sighing to win the love of but one, and who thinks that, if passed with him, married life must be an elysium.

Milly and Muriel Gaythorne are amongst the invited, and, strangely enough, Hubert Vyner. It is two years since Muriel parted from Hubert that soft, balmy evening, on Brighton Pier. It is the first time that he has visited Rymer Lodge; and he is no favourite with Mrs. Benfield, who is one of the few people who knows the truth of the broken

bonds between him and Muriel. Although warmly attached to the girl, the heartless little woman continually lacerates the still unhealed wounds by thoughtlessly congratulating her on her fortunate escape from a marriage with him, especially as he is now engaged to Milly Gaythorne, and 'is like the rest of the unprincipled wretches, my dear!' with her usual deprecatory sigh and elevation of eyebrows.

Muriel has, by this time, partly inured herself to the difficult task of meeting him, unmoved, in public; but she has had a hard fight to crush down her love and sorrow through this visit, for it is the first time she meets him with his future wife, although the latter is her own cousin. Mrs. Benfield's misjudged remarks relative to Hubert's delinquencies may perhaps be forgiven on the score that she fully believes what Muriel confirms by her behaviour, namely, that the old love is extinct. But two years have not been sufficient to make any material alteration in her feelings. Outwardly, she shows indifference or forgetfulness of the past, but the terrible scar in her life will never be totally eradicated; and in this early stage of her grief, a bitter worm of jealous sorrow is gnawing day and night at her wounded heart, and leaving the fatal influence of its poisonous workings on her fresh young face. The evil of Hubert's disloyalty to her can never be remedied, not even by the renewal of his former devotion; for though Muriel Gaythorne feels that she could give her life for his sake, she also knows that she could never marry the man who had once willingly deceived her for the sake of another woman.

Milly Gaythorne is a very fine creature, with a tall, lithe figure, and that gold auburn hair which

is so rarely accompanied by the dark irresistible eyes which possess such fascination in their variable shades of animation and gravity. Milly's eyes are deceptive: beautiful and vivacious they may be with all sincerity, but the earnestness which sometimes shadows their merriment like a pall is a foible of which she has often found it necessary and advantageous to make use. There is a slight family resemblance to be traced in Hubert Vyner's past and present loves. The one is brown-haired, with deep grey tell-tale eyes, which are the mirrors of her sensitive and serious nature; the other is a bright, handsome girl, with overflowing spirits, glorious eyes, a bewitching smile, and a shallow and fickle heart; but the varied expressions of their mobile faces, and the intonation of their voices, bear a decided similarity.

Milly is fond of Muriel in her yea-nay manner of liking anybody or anything; and her affection and her strong chattering propensities are afforded a favourable opportunity of displaying themselves to an unusual extent, as the girls share the same bedroom under Mrs. Benfield's hospitable roof; so her griefs and pleasures, and the histories of past flirtations and present admirers, are all confided to Muriel, who, fortunately, is a patient listener, always a necessary quality in one of Milly Gaythorne's friends.

'It is a great bore, Hubert having to go away to-morrow, isn't it, Muriel?' she says, planting her feet on the fender, and brushing out her long sunny hair.

'Yes; it is unfortunate.'

'Especially as I have set my heart on going to this New Year's Day ball. I can't put that off, can I, with my dress and all ordered? Do you think Hubert will be vexed at my going?'

'Well, of that it is impossible to judge. Men differ so in their wishes with regard to the girl to whom they are engaged;' and Muriel sighs as she remembers a time when his absence rendered the pleasure of a dance a blank.

'I don't think he will really mind,' resumes Milly, too much occupied with the subject of the ball to have detected the sigh (she is quite ignorant of the love Hubert once affected to bear for her cousin), 'because when I spoke to him about it to-day, he kissed me and said he had too much confidence in me to wish to deprive me of the pleasure of waltzing, which you know I adore; but I mention it to you because I am not sure all the same that he does like it, because—you know—he is rather jealous of Lord Emlyn.'

'Jealous of that boy?' exclaims her cousin, twisting round to confront Milly, and opening her eyes wide with astonishment.

'He is not such a boy as you think,' retorts Milly, quickly and rather testily.

'He's only one-and-twenty, my dear; and, at any rate, a boy compared to you. Why, you're four years older than he is!'

'It doesn't make much difference to him, then,' answers Milly, who does not like these comparisons; 'for he has twice taken my hand, and looks at me so earnestly and so long with those lovely eyes, and yesterday

'Oh, well!' interrupts Muriel, with exhausted patience, and anxious to curtail one of Milly's long stories; 'he would soon cease making love to you if you did not encourage him.'

'Encourage him, indeed! Why, I snub him on every available occasion; but he is so self-willed and imperative, and insisted upon my keeping a lot of dances for

him; but I said I could not possibly guarantee more than four waltzes and a stray galop or two; but then I thought Hubert would be present.'

'And now that he will not, you must not make yourself conspicuous by dancing too often with the same man?'

'That's just it, Muriel. But how on earth am I to get out of it? Everard will be so disappointed.'

'Do you mean Lord Emlyn?'

'Of course! Whom else? But do help me, Muriel.'

'Your only remedy is not to go,' answers Muriel, who is already weary of the discussion, and beginning to feel cross.

'But, my dear, my dress! Such lovely white satin and gold lace; much too seraphic to be wasted.'

'You might tell Lord Emlyn you have promised more than you can fulfil.'

'What? Break my engagements? How can I be so rude? It is really too bad of Hubert to place me in such a dilemma,' says Milly, with a pettish pout, and nearly in tears. 'I think he might stay; and I shall ask him to do so for my sake. Everything would be all right then.'

'That would be quite useless. You must not forget, dear, that nothing but a matter of life or death can detain a Queen's messenger.'

'Well, I call this as urgent. It concerns my happiness.'

'Oh! don't be so foolish, Milly. You know well enough that he would stay, were it possible.'

'I think he is awfully unkind, and I shall tell him so,' says Milly, as she rises from her seat, and presents her cheek, scorched to a bright crimson by the fire, for Muriel's good-night embrace.

'You must not dream of such a thing,' says the mentor of twenty

to the cousin, who should be able to take care of herself. 'It will be easy enough to put off Lord Emlyn, and then you can go and enjoy your ball.'

'Well, really, Muriel, your ideas are very ridiculous; but I am too much done up with our skating to talk any more now, so good-night,' and with a bound Milly leaps into bed, and soon all her woes are lost in the oblivion of dreamless sleep.

It is long before Muriel can close her eyes. She lies awake, gazing into the fire, and watching the sudden gleams of ruddy light flicker about the room. Harassing doubts and fears will cross her mind with regard to Milly, whom she so well knows to be one of those inveterate flirts, insatiable for admiration, and to whom the attentions of a member of the aristocracy would be too flattering a temptation to resist.

And Hubert leaves to-morrow for a fortnight! Muriel's heart sinks as she realises the danger to which he is exposing Milly; and her still over-weaning and unselfish love for him urge her to swear to herself a solemn oath to protect to the best of her power his most prized treasure, although that be the one who has supplanted her in his affections.

* * * *

The Assembly Rooms at Burwood have been transformed for to-night into Shadowland! The spectres of the past are treading the boards of that most commonplace of ball-rooms. Beneath its rose-curtained chandeliers, Charlemagne is waltzing with a girl of the period; Columbus is galloping with Boadicea; Charlotte Corday and Alfred the Great pirouette in a quadrille; Cromwell and the fair Cleopatra have defied the laws of society by retiring to the conservatory to flirt;

and Royalists and Roundheads, friars and queens, nuns and Lutharios, jostle one another in this motley crowd, whilst Henry the Eighth conducts a bevy of court ladies to indulge in champagne and ices.

Conspicuous amongst the dancers, both for the extravagant richness of their dresses, and their exceptional personal beauty, are Rizzio and the young Princess Elizabeth, who, utterly regardless of the breach of history they are committing by dancing together, are whirling round in the intricacies of their fifth waltz.

He is a fine, handsome young fellow, essentially Italian, both in face and figure; and the fascinating smile, and dark, languid eyes, which particularly characterise the people of that nation, must have been his by inheritance, although he is English by nationality.

Dressed in black velvet, slashed with satin of the same colour, he presents a striking contrast to his partner, the fair-haired and white-satin-robed Elizabeth, whose flushed face and sparkling eyes betray the unusual excitement and pleasure she experiences as she listens to the compliments this renegade Rizzio is pouring into her ears, and receives the assiduous attention he has been paying her all the evening.

Mephistopheles and Don Juan don't dance, so they block up the doorway, and comment disparagingly on the company, the refreshments, and the music.

'By Jove! Isn't that a pretty girl?' draws out Mephistopheles.

'Yes,' replies his companion; 'and can't she flirt?'

'Who's the fellow?'

'Lord Emlyn. She's fooling him nicely. It's a good thing Vyner's out of the way.'

'Is that the girl he's engaged to?'

'Girl! She must be seven or eight and twenty, or more. Why, I remember her—let me see—six? no, seven years ago at Portsmouth; and she was then, what is termed in the vulgar tongue, a garrison hack. Vyner 'll have a deuce of a trouble with her, I expect. She was going it pretty hard then; and she's going it again now, you see, and Emlyn will soon be a victim, young fool.'

'Son of the Earl of Bertyn, eh?'

'Yes. Only son; and a good catch.'

'Ah! Shouldn't wonder if Miss Garrison Hack—what's her name? Ah! Gaythorne. Thanks. Well, if Miss Gaythorne chuckled over the other fellow——'

And Mephistopheles passes on to a more convenient spot to criticise the charms of Princess Elizabeth, whose bright eyes scintillate with wonderful vivacity as she chatters to her partner, or taps him playfully with her fan, a performance which causes old dowagers to shrug their fat shoulders, and scraggy wallflowers to sniff about 'that girl.'

Mrs. Benfield is still young enough to thoroughly enjoy a dance in a not-too-crowded ball-room, with good music and good dancers; and her own appreciation of the delights afforded this evening has led her mind away from everything but herself, consequently she does not exercise much authority over the girls she has undertaken to *chaperon*. And the flirtation between Rizzio and Princess Elizabeth has escaped her notice. Indeed, she is too busily engaged herself in vanquishing an over-obdurate matador to criticise the follies of others.

It is evident, though, from the troubled and weary—almost despairing—expression with which

Muriel Gaythorne watches the graceful gyrations of the recreant couple, that it has painfully attracted her attention. Her eyes follow them round and round the room till her head swims; but it is not till they cease waltzing, and seek the cool refuge of an adjoining conservatory, that she renews the arduous task of testing the conversational powers of a young and very nervous jester, who apparently is more of a fool even than his dress betokens.

Muriel, in spite of her anxiety about Milly, has contrived to look unusually charming to-night. Her long black velvet and swansdown train, with her pearl-bestudded Marie Stuart cap, all harmonise wonderfully with her unobtrusive beauty. It is strange that she, Milly, and Lord Emlyn should have chosen to represent contemporaneous characters; but the trouble in this pseudo-Mary's face, and the aching at her heart, are not the result of Rizzio's desertion of her for her natural enemy Elizabeth.

It is not until two or three dances later that Muriel contrives to speak to Milly. And then, in answer to her caution, she only receives a petulant gesture, with 'I am perfectly well able to take care of myself.' And, after this, she loses sight of her self-imposed charge, and devotes herself successively to the entertainment of a grand monarch, a pirate, and a blue satin Romeo; the latter is not young enough to successfully delude his partners into the belief that he is a most lover-like gentleman, and as his age incapacitates him for pleasant dancing, and the 'Soldaten Lieder' is jarring discordantly in her ears, Muriel lures him to the supper-room, where she is met by Mrs. Benfield, who rushes towards her with an italicised exclamation of

'How glad I am to find you, my dear Muriel! I am *longing* to hear about poor Milly. What *was* the matter with her? I could not find you *anywhere*, for really these crowded ball-rooms——'

'But what about Milly?' inquires Muriel, anxiously, as she frees her arm from that of her partner.

'Milly? Oh, poor child! I thought you knew. It seemed she turned suddenly quite faint, and went home by herself, not wishing to destroy our amusement. Everard assured me he would see her safely into the carriage.'

'Milly ill!' cries Muriel. 'I must go to her. Indeed, I must, dear Mrs. Benfield,' in answer to a remonstrance. 'I cannot bear to think of her ill at home, and——alone,' and, without further comment, she again seizes the arm of her Romeo, who has been dejectedly standing apart, and almost forces him to run back through the corridor, as she tries to make him understand, in a stream of quick, incoherent words, that she wishes to see Lord Emlyn. At the entrance to the ball-room, however, she meets her partnerless jester, and asks him if he has seen the object of her search.

'No,' he answers, fidgeting beneath her anxious scrutiny till his many bells tinkle. 'I have not seen him since he took Miss Gaythorne to her carriage, about three-quarters of an hour ago.'

A horrible suspicion crosses her mind. Her antiquated Romeo, at last comprehending her wish, sends her back in his own carriage, and returns to the ball-room to spot another victim, with the hope that she may succumb more speedily to his blue satin charms than has done the impetuous Mary, Queen of Scots.

Rymer Lodge is only a mile distant from the Assembly Rooms, so that within fifteen minutes Muriel has arrived. She leaps out of the carriage, dragging her heavy train after her, and asks of the astonished servant——

'How long has Miss Millicent Gaythorne been home?'

'Nobody has come home yet,' replies the man, staring; and Muriel further confirms his belief that she is destined for Bedlam by rushing upstairs like a whirlwind.

'Where can Milly be?' she questions, as she pauses at the bed-room door. On entering, more than her very worst fears are confirmed. Hastily thrown down on the bed is Milly's white satin dress, and all her ornaments are scattered on the table. Then she has been home! But how she contrived to enter the house without the cognisance of the servants is a mystery which Muriel has not the time to solve at present.

Good heavens! If she should have—— and Muriel turns sick with fear and wild presentiment as she snatches up a little pencilled note, and tears it open. For a moment, after reading its contents, her brain swims, and she clutches hold of the table to support herself. That it should have culminated in this is more than she can realise at once. She had never anticipated more than that, perhaps, Milly had been persuaded by her foolish admirer to take a moonlight walk or drive. But this——

She does not hesitate a moment when her equanimity is restored, and her head has ceased to whirl. She almost rips off her own finery, and hastily clothes herself in her morning dress and grey waterproof cloak. In ten minutes she is equipped for her madly projected midnight excursion. Before

leaving the house she finds the latch-key in Mrs. Benfield's bedroom, and rapidly and softly descends the staircase. It is twelve by the dining-room clock. As quietly as possible she opens the hall-door, using the key to close it, so that no sound could be audible to the inmates, and walks hurriedly off in the direction of Burwood station.

And Hubert returns to-morrow! This reflection causes Muriel to quicken her walk to a run as she contemplates the misery she may probably avert, if successful. It has been the girl's purgatory, during the last fortnight, to note Milly's open encouragement of Lord Emlyn's increasing attentions; and all her influence has been used to dissuade her thoughtless cousin from her vain, misguided folly. But threats, hopes, entreaties, prayers, all have proved futile! Milly rebelled against Muriel's advice, and at last nearly quarrelled with her. One unhappy day, Muriel reluctantly overheard some words from Lord Emlyn, which were sufficient in themselves to convince her of the truth of her surmises, and she had been wretched ever since. Milly had, in consequence, treated Lord Emlyn with marked indifference until the night of the ball; but this—all this miserable escapade must have been a pre-concerted plan.

Muriel's sad thoughts are here disturbed by the rumbling of some ancient vehicle advancing up the narrow and lonely lane. Fortune has favoured her in the shape of a tumble-down cab, drawn by an attenuated Rosinante, and driven by a corpulent old cabman, weighty enough in himself to destroy the pace of a Pegasus. Necessity overrules these disadvantages, and she bids him convey her with all possible speed to the station, and ten minutes sees her at her destina-

tion. Leaving her fat Jehu unpaid, she demands of a porter 'whether the 12.45 has yet started?'

'Twenty more minutes. Down train due first,' answers that official with the distinguishing brevity of his race.

Muriel breathes more freely. There still remains to her a chance by which she can separate the delinquents. Hurrying past the porters and a sprinkling of passengers, who stare to see so young a girl alone at this time of night, and comment unfavourably on the fact, she directs her steps to the waiting-room, which is empty. The refreshment-room is closed; the fugitives are not on the platform; Muriel's nocturnal pilgrimage seems likely to prove a wild-goose chase, when she suddenly recollects that a second-class waiting-room is to be found on the other side of the station. And here her search ends. There are two women in the room. One is a brown, wrinkled old peasant; the other is a golden-haired girl—it is Milly! Muriel approaches, and touches her gently. Milly turns round quickly, and a deadly terror crosses her face as she exclaims, 'Muriel! You here?'

'Yes, Milly,' says Muriel, quietly, 'I have come to take you home.'

'Home? You do not know what you ask.'

'Come to the other waiting-room,' says Muriel, taking her arm, 'we shall be alone there;' and she will listen to no remonstrance, but compels her reluctantly to follow her.

'Are you mad, Muriel?' asks Milly, hoarsely.

'It is I who should ask that of you. But come; we have no time to lose. I have a cab here.'

'It is useless'—obstinately—'I have promised Everard, and I cannot break my word.'

'You have thought lightly

enough of keeping your vow to Hubert,' says Muriel, calmly.

Milly colours, and remains doggedly inexorable.

'Milly!' cries Muriel, in despair, 'I must take you back. Be persuaded, dear. Think how madly you are behaving, and return with me while there is yet time.'

'I cannot, and he will be looking for me now. I must go back to the other room.'

'Milly, you shall not whilst I have a breath of strength in me. Where is he now?'

'Gone to engage a carriage.'

'Which he alone must occupy! Come, Milly; be sensible;' and then, as she sees the small effect of her entreaties, she adds, more vehemently and passionately, 'You must and shall come. Remember your poor mother. It will kill her, Milly. And Hubert. Think of the utter shame you will bring both on yourself and the man whom you have sworn to love. Milly, for God's sake hear me, and have mercy on all who love you. Think of your own fair name, and Hubert's love.'

And Muriel, perceiving that her sincere eloquence is lost on the obdurate girl beside her, sinks into a chair and bursts into a paroxysm of tears as she realises how small is her influence over Milly's actions, and how futile may prove the object of her daring errand. But her tears cause Milly's to flow; and the better nature of the latter being aroused, and perhaps as the advisability of abandoning her foolish elopement occurs to her, she stoops down and kisses her poor despairing cousin, and whispers, 'It shall be as you wish, Muriel.'

Muriel starts up. 'You will return, Milly? Thank you, darling!' as if it were a favour conferred. 'Come then, you must go at once;' hastily drying her tears.

'But Everard?'

'Leave everything to me. Here is the latch-key, and my purse. Drive up to within a hundred yards of the house; then walk the rest, and let yourself in as quietly as possible, and await my arrival in the bed-room. I shall follow shortly. Here, quick. Change cloaks and hats.' And Muriel substitutes Milly's long dark blue cloak and seal-skin hat for her own grey waterproof and black bonnet, and, with a hasty kiss, sends the bewildered girl off to find her way home behind Corpulence and Rosinante.

She heaves an irrepressible sigh of relief as she hears the cab rattle off towards Rymer Lodge; she then returns to the second-class waiting-room, there to tackle the most difficult part of her task. It is not above three minutes before a man enters the room. Muriel immediately rises, and advances to meet him.

'Lord Emlyn,' she commences, 'I have to——,' and then stops dead, as she perceives she has made a mistake.

Good Heavens! It is Hubert Vyner!

She starts back with an exclamation of surprise, and hastily draws down her veil. Too late! He has recognised her!

'Muriel Gaythorne?' he exclaims, in blankest astonishment, 'what in Heaven's name are you doing here by yourself?'

Muriel is silent. She is utterly at a loss how to explain matters to him; but before she can frame an answer of any description, Lord Emlyn has entered, and advancing to her, says—

'Come, dear, we have not a minute to lose. Our train is due.'

'And pray, my Lord, what authority have you over this lady's actions?' demands Hubert, in so stern and peremptory a voice that

Lord Emlyn's countenance betrays as much fear as surprise when he turns to confront his assailant.

It is for him to be startled now, and if he had received a telegraphic summons to the infernal regions, he could not have been more taken aback.

'Hubert Vyner?' he gasps.

'Yes, Hubert Vyner! It is fortunate for Miss Gaythorne that I have returned some few hours earlier than was originally my intention, and have thus been enabled to rescue her from a coward and a——'

'Hold, sir!' cries Lord Emlyn. 'She is here by her own free will.'

'Is this so?' asks Hubert of the pale and trembling Muriel.

'Yes!' in a scarcely audible voice, with her veil down, and her face averted from Lord Emlyn.

'But as Miss Gaythorne is under age, Lord Emlyn, I take upon myself the responsibility of restoring her to her friends—a responsibility which I, as the future——'

'Yes, yes; I will return with you at once,' interposes Muriel, in time to check a speech which would have resulted in the exposure of her stratagem.

'Well,' says Lord Emlyn, 'as you will. But, by Jove, I'll have my revenge, Miss Gaythorne.'

'That is perfectly immaterial to the lady. Here, porter, fetch me a cab. Knock them up at the inn, if they've gone to bed.'

Lord Emlyn stands apart, twirling his moustache, and looking foolish.

'We may as well take our leave of one another, now,' says Hubert, and, with a bow to Muriel, Lord Emlyn quits the room.

'I must just go and collect my scattered traps,' says Hubert. 'Wait here, Muriel.' And he passes out.

He has not been absent more than a minute or two when Lord

Emlyn hastily re-enters for his travelling-bag, which, in his excessive discomfiture, he had omitted to take with him. He does not expect to find the room still occupied, and apologises for the intrusion. Muriel is in such a tremor of nervous agitation and excitement, that her lips refuse to utter the words she is anxious to say. He hesitates a moment, and then, advancing towards her, says in a tone of gentle reproach, 'Is it possible, Milly, that you speak the truth when you assert that you willingly return with Hubert Vyner? Do you mean to say that a straw will turn the current of your affections one way or the other? I will not believe it, my darling! It was fear that prompted your bitter words. Come; there is yet time to prove your affection for me.' And he puts his arm round her waist. Muriel shrinks backward from his embrace, and is silent.

'Answer me, Milly—I entreat you,' he exclaims more vehemently; 'do you mean to blast my life by your silence and treachery?'

It suddenly flashes across Muriel's mind that it would be fatal to the successful concealment of the secret from Hubert, did she not confess her identity to the man before her, so she quietly raises her veil, and looking him full in the face, says—

'You are mistaken, Lord Emlyn. I am not Milly, but Muriel Gaythorne.'

'Miss Muriel Gaythorne! by all that's wonderful.'

'Yes; and I beg that for all our sakes, you will never betray the deception I have practised to-night. Promise me, Lord Emlyn; swear it!' she exclaims passionately as she seizes his arm.

He hardly realises her words, but asks—'Milly? Where is she?'

'Safe at Rymer Lodge, by this

time. I followed you both, and have sent her back in the cab. She will reach home before Mrs. Benfield's return. But I hear footsteps—promise me, again I ask you—promise never to tell the truth. Leave Milly's name out of the affair. I am the one to blame now.'

'I promise,' he answers mechanically.

He has barely recovered his astonishment yet. The rapid succession of events, the unexpected appearance of Hubert Vyner, the mysterious substitution of Muriel for Milly, have completely dazzled him, and he stares vacantly at Muriel, who tremblingly stands before him, with a bright unnatural spot of colour on each cheek.

'Go!' she suddenly exclaims. 'I hear Mr. Vyner's voice. Go! and for God's sake, remember your promise.' He hastily shakes her hand and leaves.

When Hubert Vyner returns to fetch Muriel, he finds her sunk into a chair, by the table, with her head on her outstretched arms, sobbing as if her heart would break.

* * * * *

Five years later.

Muriel is sitting with her mother, an active, grey-haired old lady, in the tiny drawing-room of the diminutive dwelling they occupy in Westbourne Park. The same Muriel, more matured perhaps, but still the deep, earnest grey eyes, the gravely sweet smile, and still Muriel Gaythorne.

'Go and put on your things now, dear Muriel. We shall never get out if you delay any more.'

'But, mother, we must stay in, for Lord Emlyn is coming.'

'What? Coming to-day, when you only saw him last night, and then danced a scandalous number of times with him?'

'You must remember, mother,'

says Muriel, gently, and colouring slightly, 'that we are old friends; and one has not much time for talking in a ball-room.'

'Oh, my dear child! "old friends," who mean to remain nothing more than "old friends," don't spend their spare time in following a girl wherever she goes, and singling her out for their attentions and compliments when they meet in public. Depend upon it, Muriel, it only rests with you for you to be my Lady Emlyn, and sooner or later, Countess of Bertyn.'

'Please don't be ridiculous, mamma. Indeed there is no reason to suppose anything of the kind.'

'Fiddlesticks, my dear! Don't go beating about the bush in that way. You must know that Lord Emlyn has paid you as much attention as a man could do. Well, I must go out any way, so you stay and receive him,' and the old lady trots out, rather pleased than otherwise at the happy circumstance which enables them to see one another alone, and smiling with gratified pride as she pictures herself the mother-in-law of an earl, and grandmother of little lords and ladies.

Muriel sits down to enjoy herself in idleness with a fascinating novel, and her feet perched on the fender, for it is one of those piercingly cold winter days when the wind and frost seem to penetrate every corner of the house.

She is not reading, however, but dreaming. Of the past? But why should not Muriel Gaythorne be building castles for the future, for a happy smile plays about her mouth, and her mobile features have lost a certain sharpness and austerity which threatened to spoil her beauty when she was still writhing under the disappointment so cruelly inflicted by Hubert Vyner?

Her reverie is suddenly disturbed by a double knock, and she jumps up and commences pushing away refractory locks of hair before the mirror, and arranging her collar and cuffs. Before she has had time to satisfactorily complete this impromptu adornment, her expected visitor is announced, and she runs forward with undoubted pleasure to meet him.

'How do you do, Lord Emlyn? Mamma is out; but I expect her in shortly. Will you wait a little while?'

The invitation is not needed, as Muriel well knows, for he has anticipated it, by taking a chair beside her.

'And how are you after your dance, Miss Gaythorne?'

'Quite well, thank you; and ready for such another to-night.'

'Such another! Yes. Ah! it was very delightful,' and he stretches out his legs and leans back in his chair, in an attitude that expresses perfect enjoyment.

'By-the-by,' says Muriel, smiling, 'we have had some mutual friends to lunch. Can you guess whom?'

'Mrs. Benfield.'

'She is of the singular number. No. Mr. and Mrs. Hubert Vyner.'

'No? By Jove! Have you? and he pulls his moustache thoughtfully, and stares into the glowing fire.

'I wish you had come in an hour earlier. I should like to have seen the meeting.'

'I can assure you I am very glad I was nowhere within reach. Vyner has never forgiven me; and what on earth should I have said to her?'

'Oh! Milly would soon have put you at your ease. She is accustomed to meet ancient lovers.'

'I was not a lover!'

'Were you not?' with a questioning smile.

'Don't tease me, Muriel. You know well enough how she led me on from compliments to flirtation, and from flirtation to love-making, etc., till—— Well, she was very pretty.'

'Ah me, she hath a lovely face, God in His mercy give her grace.'

'By-the-by, I wish you would tell me what happened at Rymer Lodge when you arrived there with Vyner?'

He hesitates rather as he makes this request. He is uncertain whether she will comply with it or not.

Muriel's answer is perfectly unhesitating.

'Oh! there was a scene; and Mrs. Benfield cried and stormed, and made insinuations about a "viper;" and Milly held her tongue; and Hubert—well, I suppose he blessed himself that Milly was not as I was.'

'Do you mean to say that he has never known the truth?'

'No one knows the truth, Lord Emlyn, but you and I. My mother was abroad at the time, and is blissfully ignorant of the whole affair. My friends kindly withheld the whole story from her, poor old thing!'

'By Jove! I didn't know you were so fond of Mrs. Vyner as all that!'

'Fond of Mrs. Vyner?' says Muriel quickly, and nettled that he should even imagine such a thing. 'Do you suppose that I did it for *her* sake?'

'I don't suppose it was for your own pleasure. Muriel, if not for hers, for whose sake was it, then?' he asks earnestly, bending towards her, and looking into her eyes.

'It was not for yours!' blurts out Muriel, and then turns away,

colouring in shame for her bluntness.

'Worse luck!' he sighs; but she apparently does not hear his muttered ejaculation. She feels so exasperated that he should dare to suppose she was in love with him—then.

'Forgive me!' she says, suddenly. 'I did not mean to be rude.'

'You are forgiven,' he answers, in a mock-magnanimous tone, to conceal his annoyance.

'Thanks,' she laughs, and then asks, 'How did you contrive to get into the house that night?'

'There are such things as latch-keys, Miss Gaythorne; and Rymer Lodge boasted of two, of which one was in my possession; but please do not ask me disagreeable questions. Tell me about your own motives for behaving as you did.'

'One more question. How about the revenge?' she asks, slyly.

'I gave up my plans of revenge, Muriel, when I found they would not equal yours. You have had a complete revenge on me for my conduct.'

'Would you care to hear all about it?' she asks, and then stops short, questioning why she should tell to this man what no one else knows.

'Of course I should. I have a right to know, have I not, Miss Gaythorne, since I was so closely connected with it all?'

And then Muriel tells him, in a low, hurried voice, the history of her young, passionate love for Hubert Vyner; of her oath to guard Milly from shame for his sake; and of the onus she had to

bear for her supposed elopement with him—Lord Emlyn.

'And you did it all for love of him, Muriel? How good, and noble, and generous of you! I never realised till now how purely unselfish a woman's love can be. And you suffer still, poor child?'

The tears stand in her eyes. He speaks so kindly, and she is so overcome at having raked up the ashes of the past, that she is unable to answer, and lets him retain the hand he has clasped within his own.

'Muriel, do you mean to say you no longer care for him?'

'No, Lord Emlyn. I am very fond of Hubert Vyner still, as a friend, as a brother; but the idol of my younger days is destroyed, and that love is forgotten.'

'Is it true?' he exclaims. 'Is your heart free to love again, Muriel?'

She has released her hand from his grasp, and walked to the window; and he follows her there. The snow flakes are falling heavily outside, and darken the atmosphere; whilst within, the rosy firelight dances about the room, and gives him occasional glimpses of her tear-stained face.

The tears are still streaming down it, and Everard cannot but hope that they are for him, although he hardly dare believe so great a happiness.

'Muriel,' he says gently, and looking into the depths of her eyes, 'shall you ever love again?'

'That, Everard,' she answers, placing her hand in his, whilst her eyes betray the secret, 'is for the future to reveal.'

EVE KENYON.



WEST END NOTES.

PRINCE'S CLUB—BRILLIANT MARRIAGES—THE LAST JEWEL ROBBERY—MR. THOMAS CARLYLE—ARTISTIC HOUSES—TRAFALGAR SQUARE—LADY DUDLEY—THE 'ROLL CALL'—MÉNUS.

THE 'new rule at Prince's' is causing murmurs both loud and deep. A pleasant laxity had obtained, by which the complaisant members presented books of admission cheques to their friends, who thus enjoyed most of the rights of membership. In an evil or awkward hour a gentleman introduced 'a lady of quality,' concerning whom idle tongues had been wagging, with the result of some confusion; and thus an excuse was found for stopping what might have become an abuse, and for closing up the ranks of the club. One piquant result, however, has been the sort of strain on nuptial relations; those who are considered one, socially and politically, becoming violently divorced. Husbands can enter where wives may not, and *vice versa*. Some affect to bewail this arrangement; but it is suspected by the Voltaireans that these hypocrites are secretly pleased. It is pleaded artfully, 'I would bring my wife here; but what can I do? The rule of the club is imperative. It would be quixotic to retire,' &c. Thus does the rogue justify the matter; and thus the club has been filled with such 'odds and ends' as wifeless husbands, husbandless wives, to which might be added motherless daughters and orphaned mammas.

Now that the covered rink is opened, the scene on dark winter's evenings is curious and original. The constant clatter of the rolling wheels, the flying figures, the sudden cataclasm, the mixed sound of scraping, smashing, and final 'thud' as a fellow-creature bites the asphalt, or falls, the gyrations of

the fair, all form a novel and exciting spectacle. Among the most skilful and industrious skaters are the Marquis of C—— and the Messrs. Murietta, so conspicuous at polo, Lady A—— C——, and Lady F——.

As the season draws on, of course the eagerness to join increases. The lists are swelled by vast numbers, the day of whose admission may be set down for the mysterious era when Sundays come in the middle of the week, or when the Greek method of 'cycling' is revived. The regulations say that every one must be proposed and seconded by two members; but the truth is that no average 'Mrs.' or 'Mr.' has a chance of admission, unless taken in hand by an influential member of the committee, which consists of two marquises, five earls, six lords, and three or four fashionable members of Parliament—a serious jury for a City lady to go before. At the last ballot it is whispered that only twenty ladies were admitted.

Here is a subject for reflection, and which the glorious army of dowagers may perpend and inwardly digest. As some families are remarkable for their success in politics, others for the number of sons they have supplied to the law and the army, so certain houses have been conspicuous for their success in what may be called the noble Profession of Marriage. Of course it is in the power of any one to repair some morning with a partner to the neighbouring church, and there undergo the clergyman and his appointed form;

to this easy feat we by no means refer. It is the grand *coups*, the splendid alliances, and, more prodigious still, the series of such, secured by skilful matron for her train of daughters, that extort a cry of admiration, and imply genius of the order of a Turenne or a Pitt. The name of the Duchess of Gordon must be ever mentioned with respect, owing to her skill in this department, and that dogged sense of 'not knowing when she was beaten,' which is the note both of the British soldier and the British mother. This intrepid lady, whose daughters inherited nothing, not even her personal beauty, contrived by her personal exertions to secure as sons-in-law the Dukes of Richmond, Bedford, and Manchester, the Marquis Cornwallis, and a baronet; the last must have seemed as much a *mésalliance* as marrying a footman. Nay, it is said that when one of the dukes was seized with a mortal illness, after the preliminaries only had been arranged, she brought her daughter to attend him to the last with a pre-conjugal devotion and fidelity, and within a year had arranged a new marriage with his brother and heir! We can hear the deep-drawn breath, the wistful exclamation of admiration as some less successful though equally encumbered matron reads this, and, as in the case of Dr. Lynn, the conjuror, wonders 'how it's done.'

But these prodigies are not unknown to our own time. It is curious that Scotch families should have won most distinction in this walk. One branch of the great house of Hamilton, like that of the Hapsburgs—*tu felix Austria nibe*—has fortified itself in the most surprising way by connections with a line of illustrious families. The present Duke of Abercorn was a simple Irish mar-

quis, with but a moderate income for a peer, and an average estate in the north of Ireland; but he came of a proud and aspiring stock. The late Marquis, who was Lady Morgan's patron, was one of the haughtiest men of his time; and as evidence of his state, it was reported that the sheets of his bed were of satin or silk (the point is not of importance). The present marquis, whose name, not inappropriately, opens Sir Bernard Burke's grand roll of heraldry, claims to be Duke of Châtellerault in France, and is one of the three peers who have 'distinct peerages in the three kingdoms.' He began by marrying the Duke of Bedford's daughter, then became a Knight of the Garter and Lord Lieutenant of Ireland. Of his daughters, one is married to the Earl of Lichfield; a second to the Earl of Durham; a third to the Earl of Dalkeith, who will be Duke of Buccleuch; a fourth to the Earl of Mount-Edgumbe; a fifth to the Marquis of Lansdowne; a sixth to the Marquis of Blandford, and future Duke of Marlborough. His three sons, too, are in the House of Commons, and his brother sat in the last Parliament.

The Moncrieffes, another family, but of lower degree, have been also singularly fortunate in their alliances. It is curious to find the beautiful daughters of a baronet winning a duke, an earl, and two baronets.

The history of lost jewels—even excluding that of the *collier de la reine*, rehearsed so often—would make a strange contribution to romance. It might appear from such a collection, that the very possession of such things in quantity imparts an Eastern arrogance, with an almost barbaric absence of good taste. This may arise from the sense of power, and from

jewels being the only shape in which Eastern wealth can be displayed on the figure. You cannot appear in a suit of solid gold, or in a waistcoat bordered with cheques and bank-notes; but your wife may display diamonds to the amount of twenty or thirty thousand pounds. It is, as Johnson would say, 'the potentiality of becoming rich beyond the dreams of avarice' at any moment, that may be the cause of this demeanour. A share of eccentricity, too, usually denotes the person who has obtained notoriety for the possession of jewels; and such oddity it would hardly be fanciful to impute to a mysterious power in the gems themselves. The owner must be perpetually hearing lavish compliments on their magnificence and on his own wealth; he must be nervously watchful and anxious as to their safety, jealous of rival owners, and suspicious as to the designs of others, especially of those about him. The names of the late Duke of Brunswick, Princes Demidoff and Esterhazy will at once suggest themselves.

There is something splendid in the robbery of magnificent jewels, and it may be conceived how so daring and successful a one as the recent Dudley *coup* must have raised the reputation of the Toby Crackit who operated. Yet there was a something *parvenu* in the fashion in which the loss was accepted. One would have looked for the splendid indifference of the *grand seigneur*; the ordering up 'more carriages and four'; instead there was a fussiness and annoyance inconsistent with the 'noblesse oblige' principle, and an undue eagerness to 'get the things back,' shown by the awkward and unbecoming promise of impunity should the articles be restored. The most piquantly welcome ele-

ment in the transaction was the letter of Lord Dudley's father-in-law, and which reflects the sultanic dignity of one who is connected with jewels. It is worth preserving:—

'SIR,—In case the extract from the "Echo" copied into your journal, might mislead those of your readers who are interested in the case, I think it right to correct one or two errors in that statement. The jewels lost were not "The Dudley Case," and were not worth 50,000*l*. The case lost was one containing Lady Dudley's jewels, many of which had been presented to her by Lord Dudley and others by friends, and one valuable bracelet presented by the town of Dudley. The total loss in money value was, I believe, about 15,000*l*. The case was not laid down on the platform by the servant in charge (as described in the "Echo"), but was taken from under the foot of Lady Dudley's maid, who placed it there for safety on alighting from the cab which took her to the station, whilst busied in receiving other property belonging to Lady Dudley from the other occupant of the cab. There was no crowd present. I may mention that Lady Dudley's maid is a stout, middle-aged Scotchwoman, who was with Lady Dudley before she married, and there can be no doubt as to her faithfulness and honesty.'

After deduction of all these bewildering 'cases' (what is the mysterious 'Dudley Case'?), and the complaisant enumeration of the property, the fashionable world must, at least, be grateful for the distinction between 'the servant in charge,' who did *not* lay 'the case' on the platform, and who was probably 'the other occupant of the cab,' and 'Lady Dudley's maid.' The little biography of 'Lady Dudley's maid' is really delightful. This valuable woman,

it will be seen, could perform no less than three operations at the same moment. She could 'alight from a cab,' be 'busied in receiving property from the occupant,' and place the case, for safety, 'under her foot.' Further, she was 'stout and middle-aged,'—and therefore there could be no doubt as to her faithfulness and honesty,—youth and leanness being notoriously associated with treachery and dishonesty. Altogether, letter-writing is not the baronet's strong point—he will pardon us saying so: or his style seems to have been affected by the jewel euthanasia of his son-in-law.

One of the most interesting characters of our time is Mr. Thomas Carlyle. There is something so thoroughly genuine, so direct and simple, in his nature, that those who have been in his society—and this is now becoming a rarer and rarer privilege—own to a charm and attraction that they have never before experienced. He has, too, a quaint humour, of which only the few have an idea: the parrot critics, after their manner, talking of 'Carlylese' and 'dialect,' and 'mannerisms,' hopelessly ignorant of the fact that his mode of expression is but the *form* of his thoughts, which could not be expressed in any other mode. It is, therefore, no affectation or mannerism, but, on the contrary, a genuine simplicity, as being the directest mode of expressing himself. Mr. Disraeli must have been in his dreamiest mood when he fancied that his offer of those tinsel letters, 'G.C.B.,' would have been accepted—or, indeed, have been an appropriate inducement—though of course intended as a compliment. What a curiously quaint flavour is in his letters! Who could write *on shoes*, so well to the point, and with such purpose, as

he does in the following little screed, addressed to a West End tradesman?—

'DEAR SIR,—Not for your sake alone, but for that of a Public suffering much in its *feet*, I am willing to testify that you have rendered me complete and unexpected relief in that particular; and in short, on trial after trial, that you seem to me to possess, in signal contrast to so very many of your brethren, the actual *art of making shoes which are easy to the wearer*. My thanks to you are emphatic and sincere.

'T. CARLYLE.

'5, Cheyne Row, Chelsea,
'10th July, 1868.'

There is here some of the philosophy of the '*Sartor Resartus*.' I myself—*moi qui vous parle*—have heard him descant, with delightful effect, on the same subject, dwelling on the decay of shoe-making, and the merits of a pair gotten some sixty or seventy years ago, at Dumfries, I think; the foot, he seemed to hint, being the last element that now enters into the fantasy of the maker. This non-relation of the thing desired to its purpose is part of the 'shoddy' system of our day. To hear him talk, his 'churchwarden' pipe in hand, every word enriched by that broad Scotch accent, is a delightful entertainment.

The connoisseur in houses, as he strays towards Kensington, past the Albert Hall, will find some novelties that will interest him. A well-built, well-laid-out house is indeed as pleasing and satisfactory as a picture or choice bit of china. Some of the unassuming old brick mansions in Portman Square, or Grosvenor Street, are artistic in what may seem so trifling a thing as the proportion of the windows to the wall in

which they are pierced, and as specimens of the treatment of brickwork. The little old-fashioned tenement near the Albert Hall, known as Eden Lodge, with its squeezed little doors, has lately given place to a many-gabled structure with a tiled roof, which suggests some antique farmhouse. There is a certain quaintness in this building; but the imitation of the old model has been carried out too closely. The house seems too much broken up into corners, crannies, and projections, and rather suggests the discomforts and little accommodation of the time to which it belongs. Still, the red tiles, tall chimneys, the little belfry, and scraps of neat iron-work are welcome enough. It is to be feared that repairs after storms will be constant and costly; as all these corners, projections, &c., offer convenient purchase to the gale. A quarter of a mile farther down we come to Palace Gate; where we may turn down to the left for a few moments. Here is the mansion of a well-known artist, fast approaching completion, of a dark-red brick, edged with a cream-coloured stone. Much would be expected in the home of an artist—and of such an artist—under whose inspiration Mr. Hardwicke, the architect, must have worked. Yet the result is scarcely striking. It appears to be too tall and spare, and suggests that a storey had been added, as an afterthought. It looks, too, as though there had been 'choppings and changes' to suit new-found requirements of the owner. This supposition is probably gratuitous; still, if it be so, the house seems to want artistic unity. Some two or three numbers lower down is a delightfully piquant modern-antique, of a faintly-toned red and yellow brick-work (the old-fashioned blend), after the Hatfield House pattern.

Here are the small panes in white frames; while the centre niche is filled, very appropriately, with a handsome blue Nankin jar—which might prompt Leigh Hunt to knock respectfully and ask to see the owner, to thank him for his attention to the public. There is a pleasant quaintness in the idea, to say nothing of an agreeable bit of colour. The iron railwork of balcony and area is admirable for its simplicity and good effect, the iron being treated according to its natural properties. The side of the house, instead of offering a shabby baldness, as though it were the front only that deserved decoration, is slightly ornamented, in excellent taste; the windows being disposed with a pleasant straggling irregularity; while the owner's 'device,' the date of erection, &c., is wrought upon a sort of shield. The only objection that might be taken to this charming yet unpretending little mansion is the brick porch, which descends *with* the steps and follows the same slope. This gives a kind of awkward air, and seems, at first, to cut off all access to the hall-door. Near it are some pretty houses of a French pattern, and a little below, another curious 'Hatfield House' building. At the corner of the highroad is the Duke of Bedford's solidly-built villa, in capacity an artfully disguised mansion; and in front, Mr. John Forster's handsome house, the residence of a true *littérateur*. Such is this interesting little cluster of tenements; which, from the enormous value of the ground, and the *prestige* of the builders—the Cubitts—and the wealth of the owners, exhibits house-building under its most satisfactory conditions.

'Proceed we now,' as the delightful 'Little Pedlington Guide' has it, a short way into Kensington,

and we pass the huge palace which Baron Grant has just reared. This edifice seems the apotheosis of successful finance, and can scarcely be surveyed by unsuccessful speculators with feelings of satisfaction. This obese pile seems to stand 'with its hands in its breeches-pockets,' and to be as 'loud' in its dress as a Jewish merchant on 'Change. We miss the old 'Kensington House' which lately stood there, with its regiment of tall windows, and cheerful red and ancient roof. There the French Duchesses lived and held her court. There, too, nearly a hundred years later, the poor French *émigrés* opened their school, and 'Monsieur' came; and, finally—only the other day—a thriving lunatic asylum was established. These changes and levellings are not to be welcomed.

A little intelligence might do a great deal for Trafalgar Square. At the present moment it is laid out with the least possible effect. The basins of the fountains are monstrously out of proportion with the space: those in the Place de la Concorde are not so big. The long row of stone posts are unmeaning, and lessen the idea of space, and should be removed. The twisted stair that leads down from the National Gallery is awkward and clumsy. Finally, the statues, execrable themselves, are disposed after no symmetrical principle. An obvious improvement would be a broad flight of steps from the road in front of the Gallery, which would furnish the idea of space. The column is a most unfortunate ornament, and makes the place look half as small as it is. A plan from a skilled Frenchman, who had been employed under M. Hausmann, would be the safest mode of beginning the work.

As the portrait of Lady Dudley adorns every stationer's window, and invites the constant criticism of every lounge and *flaneur*, we also may join the admiring crowd, and offer our respectful homage. This charming picture is the work of the cunning Bergamasco of St. Petersburg, to whom most of the royalties of the world have sat. Nothing more delicate or interesting can be conceived than this face, with its refined outlines, velvety surface, and piquant expression of quiet enjoyment, so opposed to the accepted type of aristocratic languor. To sit to a photographer is an art, and requires as an element an absence of affectation; as ordinarily the sitter, under the responsibility of the situation, supplies a constrained and intense expression which is unfamiliar to his friends. Such is wholly wanting in this agreeable picture, now enshrined in many a sumptuous photographic album (welcome plank, after shipwreck, for the guests who come up from the dinner-table), and criticised a thousand times. Here is one of the thousand and one gratifying shapes of celebrity, in its own way not unacceptable. We have long since gone back to the days of 'Lofty' in 'The Good-natured Man,' who asks, when his word is doubted, was it for this that his head was 'stuck in the print-shops.' Everybody's head appears now to be 'stuck in the print-shops.' Nothing, indeed, is more curious than the miscellany of 'cartes' in a window. The notorious *bouffe* actress side by side with Lady —, and the Dean of — in company with Miss —, whose claims to celebrity or notoriety are of a kind more hinted at than declared. Perhaps the most effective faces are those of Dr. Manning and Dr. Newman, the former per-

haps one of the most spiritual conceivable. The 'Beautiful Rousby' appears at every turn, and, it must be said, deserves this appreciation. The 'Ape' portraits seem to be falling off, either from the selection of unfamiliar and sometimes obscure persons, or from a sameness of treatment. It may be said, indeed, that when an artist looks merely for the earthy and unintellectual in a face, he is certain to want variety, as these elements nearly always find the same expression. If we turn over a volume of these clever caricatures, we shall notice a sort of Darwinised tone—a certain animal monstrosity tending to general ugliness. For a change, Mr. Pellegrini should now look for what is pleasing and intelligent in human nature; but then perhaps, like Thackeray's Amelias and other good young ladies, he would become uninteresting. How curious must be this artist's position in society; how every lion hitherto undrawn must look askance at him at the evening party. Fancy the hostess coming to Lord — with the alarming intimation, 'Would you allow me to introduce Mr. Pellegrini to you?' It has been said, indeed, that the artist frankly informs the victims of the celebrity destined; and this at once removes the *gêne* of the situation. Imagine, too, the shock some Saturday morning as you walk the streets and see yourself at every newsvendor's door in the little black frame, some chuckling faces surveying the gentle stoop which has been converted into a hump, the placid smile become a comic grin, and that short-sightedness changed into a sort of squint; yet the whole so exceedingly like. Some of them are, indeed, masterly—masterly in the psychological element, as it may be called, those little touches of manner and cha-

racter which can hardly be described. What violin-player has not recognised the attitude of H.R.H. the Duke of Edinburgh in the orchestra, the violin on the knee, the finger delicately touching the string to feel if it be in tune, the figure on the edge of the stool, the whole attitude belonging to the indescribable and fantastic associations, masonic almost, between the violinist and his instrument. Every one has noticed those mysterious communings and coquettings which the performer holds with his instrument in the intervals of the performance. Here is, indeed, proof that Mr. Pellegrini is an 'introseeing' artist.

The irrepressible 'Roll Call' has come back to town to be a special show, after being taken round some of the great cities. This fairly-painted picture will always furnish a valuable lesson as to how to obtain popularity. A statesman once kept what he called his 'foolometer,' a dull country member, whose opinion he anxiously inquired after, as nicely representing that of the vast stupid masses. The same principle is at the root of the success of some of those hugely successful penny papers and religious periodicals; cleverness, and even genius, being exerted in suiting the production to the taste and capacity of the consumer. By chance or design, the picture was fitted nicely to the intelligence of the herd that swarms to shilling exhibitions: the Prince of Wales's compliment—which some protest was inspired by the belief that it was the work of a well-known surgeon of the same name—touched the 'Court Newsmen' chord, the impulse became uncontrollable, and the day was won. Merit cannot be denied to the lady artist, and she may be sym-

pathised with in her triumph. But no one can have patience with the droves of indiscriminating, gaping admirers, whom it was almost revolting to see struggling and squeezing past the policeman to get a good view, and whose raptures were as unmeaning as they were ignorant. Close by was Alma Tadema's noble picture of 'The Connoisseurs,' in which was grace, refinement, surprising power, and much of the qualities found in the works of the great masters; but this the herd could not see. Pearls indeed cast to—but these visitors were on two legs, so the offensive remark does not apply. But, as we said, the man that would win what may be called a vulgar success would do well to give serious study to this picture—to analyse it carefully, and abstract the chief elements. This process, if it does not help him to select, will at least show him what he must avoid, if he would 'hit' the public. Were I an artist, I would desperately and invariably consult a little coterie formed of my own private cook, of the greengrocer, the apothecary's wife—going no higher than the curate's and music master's daughters. Were they enthusiastic, success was assured.

Among the many little escapades of fashion, none have been pushed to more extravagant lengths than the decoration of the dinner-table. The costly devices that have been contrived to ornament it have ended in imparting a tawdry and vulgar air. There are what our lively young men call 'dodges' of blue china and jewelled glass for holding flowers, salt, and other things. All such are out of keeping with the pure simplicity of 'napery.' The latest craze seems to be to run riot in conceits for the *menu*. There are

florid-coloured pictures, in the Rimmel manner, of pink boys gamboling and struggling among the *rôts* and *relevées*. The little card willow-pattern plates were piquant at first, but are trifling and ordinary. Then we had china scrolls, resting on some support, or propped up between a pair of white cupids. But the last effort shows the depth to which excessive realism can lead, and how dangerously close it borders on vulgarity. You dispose along your showy table a number of well-modelled 'sandwich-men'—their shuffling, out-at-elbows-air properly expressed, broken-down soldiers, shabby-genteel fellows, like the wretched beings in Mr. Fildes' touching picture—and hang on their shoulders the regular boards of card, on which is written a list of your dishes. Some of the more rapid guests—belonging to the class that offers 'to pull crackers' with the lady sitting beside them—and what a mysterious type of mind *that* is—are sure to welcome these fantastic trifles with delight. They even take up the little figures in their hands—which furnish them with an opening for a new topic. The correct in taste and the more judicious will return to the simple china tablet, on which the *chef* has written, in his own *batterie-de-cuisine* writing, the names of his dishes. On the old principle of the undecorated Lord Castle-reagh's being the most *décoré* of the party, the most elegant table will be that which offers the finest glass, china, and damask. It is your people of bad taste and *ton* who are addicted to nicknacks, who buy 'patent' things, and who send round after dinner a travelling liqueur stand made in the shape of a silver locomotive! It seems incredible; but such things have been seen at certain houses.

THE MAN IN THE MASK.

LONDON SOCIETY.

APRIL, 1875.

ABOVE SUSPICION.

By MRS. J. H. RIDDELL.

CHAPTER XIX.

UNCLE AND NIECE.

'I am afraid it is impossible to make terms with the fellow without buying him,' said Mr. Irwin, in answer to his niece's entreaty; 'and there is nothing of which I have such a dread as putting myself into the power of any human being.'

'But if you are in his power already, uncle?' she suggested.

'I should be putting myself more in his power if I began paying him for silence.'

'In what way?'

'Why, his demands would go on increasing till the burden became unendurable—besides, there may be fifty other people who recollect me perfectly.'

'I thought you said he would not have recognised you, had it not been for the unfortunate meeting with—my mother.'

'He had some remembrance of me before that. Oh, Bella! what would I not give to be able to begin my life over again with my present experience! I think the happiest man on earth must be he who, having no past he is afraid to remember, can walk in the present, and on to face the future without dread.'

She did not answer. She was thinking how frequently the same

idea had occurred to her: how enviable, spite of its cares, its shifts, its debts and its humiliations, Mr. Wright's lot had often seemed when contrasted with her own.

A life which held nothing in it to be concealed was her notion of an existence to be envied.

We have each and all our ideal of perfect happiness. Mr. Wright's was to have always five pounds in his pocket, and no duns at his gates. Miss Miles', to be able to speak freely without fear, and to feel she could answer any question concerning her parents and her childhood without falsehood.

To some of the old Barthornes—to some of the loyal gentlemen, and fair, faithful daughters of Abbotsleigh—this girl had gone back for the qualities which made her shrink when she was forced to back up the fiction of her orphan condition with one untruth after another.

There had been a time when she thought her uncle would have done wisely to tell the Rev. Mr. Wright and Selina his wife the story of her life as it really was; but she thought so no longer. Life at Fisherton, which had taught her much, had proved to

her that there are some things concerning which silence is wisdom—silence is a necessity. Even as a servant, she now understood the terrible past would, if revealed, have power to destroy every blossom of happiness existence held.

She had no choice except to be careful and secret; but every vein in her heart loathed the deception she was forced to practise. Never till the end came, when deception was no longer needful, did her lips utter glibly the falsehoods her position compelled them to frame. Neither did she seek to justify her own lack of verity by dwelling on the shortcomings of others.

Not a day passed at Fisherton without some polite fiction being uttered by gracious, plausible Mrs. Wright—who was wont to say there was only one sin she humanly considered unpardonable, and that was lying; whilst as for poor Mr. Wright, the fibs he told, the 'false glosses' he put on, the mendacious statements he backed almost with tears—would have been absurd, had they not been pitiable also.

And yet, in this atmosphere, Bella kept her faith intact in all things good, true, and lovely. Perhaps, by reason of her own fault she dared not judge the fault of others. This virtue is not a common one. It is so much easier to see the mote than to feel the beam, that we may well excuse poor Mrs. Wright for frequently expressing her sorrow at finding people 'so false.'

Never once in Fisherton church, when Mr. Wright was declaring the weightier matters of the law, did this girl—in whom I hope some of my readers feel an interest—mentally thrust his words back to his condemnation. Nay, rather, when she fell on her knees and shut out the congregation, and thought of all the sermon had

taught her, her cry to God was, 'Have mercy on me, a sinner,' rather than 'I thank Thee that I am not as these.'

'Uncle,' she began at last, 'do you remember promising long ago that you would some day tell me about the work you used to do at West Green?'

'I hoped you had forgotten all that,' he said.

'I never forget: I wish—I wish I could,' she answered. 'I should be so happy if it were possible to fancy those times only a bad dream.'

'We will not recall them,' he replied.

'But there are some things I want to understand,' she persisted. 'I lie awake at night, and try to patch and put together all I can recollect of what happened when I was a child. I have often had the question on my lips before, but did not like to put it; now, however, that we have got upon the subject, I must ask you just one thing, uncle: what was the work, so still and quiet, that kept you up hours after all our neighbours were in bed?'

'It was coining,' he said doggedly. 'Don't look so frightened—we did not send out bad money, but good; and had your father contented himself with doing what he told me he intended to do—buy old silver and gold cheap—I don't know that much harm could have come of the matter; but he did not content himself with that; as you are aware. Your mother's folly and his own obstinacy ruined him.'

'Often and often I told him what the end of it must be; but he always laughed at my cautions, and said he would give any one leave to find him out who could. I do not see, however, that any good purpose can be served by our discussing that terrible past. Ever

since the night you and I walked together into London, I have tried, God knows, to lead an honest life. I have striven to make atonement where atonement was possible. Every penny of the money which fell to my share, and that was in my possession when the crash came, I have divided amongst those I had any reason to suppose suffered through our malpractices. First or last, I have never used any of your father's share in order to pay for your education; and latterly I have not touched it even to provide for your mother. As for your father, Bella, he has paid a heavy penalty for his sins, and I think we may let them rest. What I hope, and trust, and pray, now is that he may not return to England—that neither of us may ever set eyes on him again. The best news I could hear would be that he was dead, and the story of his crime and its punishment buried with him.'

She was crying, silently and secretly, but in the moonlight he could see the tears streaming down her cheeks.

'Come, dear,' he said, 'let us turn back and have no more melancholy talk. You are not responsible for his faults, and we must prevent his sins being ever visited on you. The day may come when you will have to decide for yourself, whether you will cast in your lot with either of your parents—which would be certain destruction to your happiness—or whether you will strike out in life independent of both. It is possible, now Mr. Irwin is dead, that I may eventually be able to adopt you as my own daughter, and take you to my own home. That is what I should like to do; but for the present you must remain here. You are happy at the rectory, I hope and believe.'

'Quite—oh, yes!—quite,' she

said, her voice a little unsteady and broken with tears.

'And you are learning the usages of society, and all that sort of thing, which may be useful to you hereafter.'

'Yes—I think so.'

'As for your mother, Bella,' he went on, 'she is just what she always was. She was a foolish young woman, and she is now a foolish middle-aged woman. Her latest idea is to go out to Australia and join your father. She says she is certain he would not refuse to be reconciled after all these years. But I think her real reason for undertaking the journey is that she believes he is married to some one else. She was always jealous when she had him under her eye, and she is naturally more jealous now he is beyond her supervision. She did not say much about you. She asked if she could see you, and offered to go to France for the purpose; but when I reminded her of the promise your father exacted from me that I should not permit any communication, she seemed quite satisfied. At the same time, it would not surprise me if she went to every school in and about Paris to try and find you.'

'But, uncle, you are surely not going to let her sail for Australia!' exclaimed the girl.

'My dear Bella, how can I prevent her going to Australia, or any other place she takes a fancy to visit? She has money from me, of course, and she can spend it in paying rent or paying for her passage, just as she pleases. The only thing I could do would be to say: "As you are determined to have your own way, I will make that way as unpleasant to you as possible;" and this is precisely what I should not care to do. For a few pounds more she can travel comfortably instead of uncomfortably; and as it is not in the least degree

likely she will find her husband when she gets to Australia, why, no harm will be done, and she will be out of my way for some time, at all events.'

'Why should she not find him?' asked his niece.

'Because Australia is a big country, and she does not happen to know where he is in it. You may be very sure I did not give her the address to which he told me to write. She has an idea that Australia is something like New York, where, if you remember, she followed me, and found me.'

'But if they do meet, something dreadful will happen,' said the girl. 'He will never forgive her—I feel quite certain of that.'

'And if I were in his place, I do not think I could forgive her either. Knowing what she must have known——' He stopped abruptly.

'Go on, please,' entreated his niece. 'What was it she did know? Was it what I have so often fancied—what I have been afraid even to think about?'

'Why, she knew, of course—she must have known—that most of the things which came into the house were stolen,' said Mr. Irwin, a little confusedly.

'And what else?' persisted his companion.

'What else should there be? Was not that enough?'

'It is a long time ago,' she said; 'and, what with the voyage to America and the fever I had, I often get confused when trying to recall things that happened when I was young. But there comes back to me occasionally a terrible notion—I cannot remember when it first took firm hold of me—that I heard people talk about a dreadful murder; and with the murder I associate the dagger we dropped that night we walked across the quiet fields I have never seen since, and then through the Lon-

don streets. Am I right? Was not some man killed at Highgate?'

He did not immediately answer—when he did, it was in a constrained tone.

'Yes—I think there was a man found dead about that time.'

'Was it ever known who killed him?'

'Never, I believe.'

'Uncle, do you know?'

'I do not,' he answered.

'Do you suspect? Was it my father? Did we drop the clue in that silent street off the Liverpool Road?'

Then ensued a dead silence. For the first time Walter Chappell felt a sickening desire to defend his brother-in-law's character—for the first time he searched about for excuses—for the first time he felt inclined to act as his advocate.

'Uncle, you do not speak,' she said at last softly.

'My dear,' he answered, 'you press me hard and sore. I cannot tell you a lie; and yet, if I must speak, I am only able to say—what must pierce you to the heart. I believe that night you saved your father's life. I think, had that dagger been found in his house he would not have been transported—he would have died in front of Newgate. But, Bella, remember this: he did not do the deed, if it was done by him, in cold blood. I never mentioned the subject to him—I never will, except in case of the direst necessity. But my reading of the matter is this: He had constant access to the house. For days, as I take it—perhaps for weeks—he had been removing gold and silver plate and ornaments from the strong room. On the morning when McCallum died he had probably just removed some valuable articles, and being met with the spoil, in a moment of desperation he killed the man who had the misfortune to encounter

him. I have thought the matter over and over, and can come to no other conclusion than that he did kill McCallum, in order to escape the precise doom which afterwards overtook him. He was in too great a hurry to be rich, Bella. I trace every ill which has befallen him to one master passion—ambition.'

And then, taking the girl's cold hand in his, he told her the story of her father's birth, education, expectations, disappointment.

With more tenderness than he had ever thought to employ when speaking of a man he feared and almost hated, he who had turned from the error of his ways recited the wrongs of this Ishmael who considered himself to have been so harshly treated.

He spoke of him as, had circumstances happened otherwise, he might have been—a wealthy country squire, clever, well informed, highly considered; and then he presented her with the reverse of the picture. He showed her the youth, brought up to consider himself the heir, cast out from his father's house, working as a common smith—with all the blood in his veins turning to gall—with all his boyish hopes dispelled—with all the idols he had worshipped shattered.

And so he talked on till he was almost too late for his train; and she, after running a few yards on her way to the Rectory, slackened her pace to weep almost frantically, for pity, over the father she trusted she might never see more—for sorrow that she herself had not died when she lay sick of that terrible fever in New York.

CHAPTER XX.

ROSIE'S DÉBUT.

If Mr. Wright had gone to bed on Christmas Eve with even a vague fear as to the solvency of Mr. Irwin,

junior, and any doubt concerning the profitable 'cutting up' of old Mr. Irwin's estates, his direst forebodings must on Christmas morning have been entirely dissipated.

Beside the hot water lay two packets, small, sealed, suggestive—one directed to Mrs. Wright, the other to the Rev. D. Wright, both in Bella Miles' handwriting.

The first contained a plain but handsome bracelet, with Mr. Irwin's kind regards and best wishes; the second a ring, with Bella Miles' earnest hope that the Rev. Dion might spend a happy Christmas, and enjoy many happy New Years.

'Really most graceful,' said the Rector, turning the ring over and over, referring, it is scarcely necessary to say, to the thoughtfulness of the donor.

'I am sure I never expected Mr. Irwin to think of me,' remarked Mrs. Wright, sitting up in bed, and clasping the bracelet round her arm, which, though fair and soft, had lost much of the shapely plumpness of youth. 'I call this a very handsome gift indeed.'

'That it is,' agreed the Rector heartily; 'and the very thing you were in want of. You have needed a decent bracelet badly enough this many a year past, Selina.'

Which was indeed quite true, jewelry happening not to be one of the sins of extravagance that Mrs. Wright affected.

At the first stir of wakened life in their parents' apartment came the children, eager to display their gifts, with which they were laden—gifts from aunts in Ireland, who had stinted themselves to send toys and presents of all sorts to boys and girls already overstocked with books, and boxes, and dolls, and trumpets, and so forth.

Some indiscreet friend had forwarded Curran a drum, in which Roderick, with a wise foresight, had already punctured a few holes to

facilitate the speedy demise of its powers of giving annoyance; and Rosie was making morning hideous by producing appalling sounds from the interior of a barking dog.

But Miss Miles' presents exceeded those of all other donors in value and appropriateness.

Roderick, it is true, was slow to show the wonders of his dressing-case, because amongst them were a pair of razors; but the other sons and daughters of the house of Wright eagerly displayed writing-desks, and silver pencils, and small brooches, and necklaces, and knives, and boxes full of *bonbons*, which Bella had purchased.

'Now, now, now!' exclaimed Mr. Wright at last. If he was a fond parent, he was also a fidgety man, and liked to have ample leisure for making his toilet, eating his breakfast, looking out his sermon, and walking at a moderate pace to church. 'Take these things away, and be off every one of you. Do you think I can brush my hair with all you young plagues swarming about me?'

'Yes, run away, dears,' echoed the plagues' mamma. 'Curran, I hope you gave Bella a pretty kiss for her kindness to you?'

'We have all kissed her, ma,' said Miss Maria, who was judging of the effect of the new bracelet on her own wrist.

'I didn't,' contradicted Roderick, who perhaps felt he was too far advanced in years for such exercises to be considered becoming; 'but I told her she was a jolly girl, and that I was awfully obliged to her.'

'Roderick,' remonstrated Mr. Wright, 'where do you learn that incomprehensible style of language? Not from your mother or me, of that I am quite sure.'

Now, if Mr. Wright had left out that statement, his utterance might have inspired his son with rever-

ence. As matters were, the idea of either of his parents indulging in slang tickled Roderick's fancy to such a degree that he could only splutter out, 'I don't suppose, sir, my language would be proper uttered in the pulpit; but it is quite comprehensible. All fellows understand "jolly" and "awfully." I am sure you yourself know clearly what I mean.'

'A new generation is about to reign,' remarked Mr. Wright resignedly, 'and you, I suppose, are one of the intended rulers.'

He would have quoted Shakespeare at that moment anent young folks pushing elders from their stools; but he could not remember the text quite accurately; and, moreover, he was tying his white cravat, an operation which with him was one of exceeding care and nicety. Breakfast on Sunday morning at Fisherton Rectory was quite an imposing ceremony, and it is needless to say that on Christmas mornings all the resources of the establishment were brought into play.

Mr. Wright himself, in a snowy shirt and unexceptionable broad-cloth, was indeed a spectacle to rejoice the heart of all good Protestants; and then there was Mrs. Wright, arrayed in her best bib and tucker; and the children, the eldest dressed out in their choicest apparel, the youngest soaped and towelled up to a state of the highest perfection, with well-oiled sleek heads, with wonderful chubby mottled-looking arms, with pinafores which rivalled the whiteness of their male parent's shirt, with little rosettes of bright-coloured ribbon tying up their sleeves, and a fillet of the same confining their hair.

It was not in Mr. Wright's human nature to refrain from casting a triumphant look at Colonel Le-schelles when the troop ranged

themselves round the table, and folded their hands preparatory to the grace, which their father, having a dislike to lukewarm tea, made commendably short.

As for Mrs. Wright, she held a fixed opinion that every one must be miserable, if not clearly wicked, who had not several children, and she made no secret even to the Colonel himself that she believed he was wretched because no fruitful vine and no young olive branches graced his solitary board.

On occasions such as the present she was, therefore, wont to look at her children with a fond smile, which she suffered to fade away into sadness as her eyes rested on the unhappy bachelor.

This little pantomime amused the Colonel immensely; and it was perhaps because she was the only one of the party likely to sympathise with his enjoyment of the position that his glance involuntarily sought out Bella Miles, in whose face he saw something of mirth lurking.

Spite of her trouble—spite of the fact that she had cried herself to sleep overnight, and that her head was still aching, by reason of the conversation with her uncle on the previous evening, Bella could not help being diverted with both parents and children.

The latter were so satisfied with themselves, and the former were so satisfied with themselves and the children too, that the sight of the family trooping downstairs, followed by the admiring looks and approving words of the Rev. Dion and Mrs. Wright, was enough to have tried the gravity of any disinterested spectator.

'Ah!' said Nurse Mary, in a discreet 'aside' to Miss Miles, 'they say stock is as good as money; but if I was in master's shoes, I think I could do with less of it than he has in hand.'

On that particular Christmas

Day Rosie was to make her *début* in church, and on the strength of this circumstance Bella Miles had presented the child with a Prayer-book almost as big, and quite as bright and new-looking, as herself.

Already, with the assistance of Roderick, Rosie and Curran had looked up several services of the Church, publicly baptized her latest doll, married her to a man who was suspended on wires, and turned summersaults in a way calculated to make the beholder dizzy; and finally, having stretched her in an eau-de-Cologne case, buried her under the blankets of her cot. These rites and ceremonies satisfactorily performed, Curran and Rosie had a stand-up fight as to who should carry the Prayer-book to church; and Nurse Mary finally conveyed the coveted article to Miss Miles' room, assuring her it had 'stood a near chance of being torn to bits among them quarrelsome young divils. God forgive me for speaking such a word—though He knows I am not calling them out of their right names.'

To describe the house when the young people were preparing and being prepared to go to church, it would, to quote Nurse Mary's lucid remark, 'take the pen of a Job.'

Maria had split her new gloves, and Roderick could not find the hat-brush, upon which Curran had seated himself in a sulk because his mamma would not let him have a mince-pie before starting. One child was crying and another laughing. Colonel Leschelles was walking up and down the drawing-room, uttering a special thanksgiving all by himself. Mr. Wright, umbrella shouldered, chest well out like a pouter-pigeon, sermon-case in his pocket, and peace and charity even towards his creditors in his heart—had wisely left the scene of action a quarter of an hour previously, and was walking with the gait and air of a bishop se-

ately to church. Mrs. Wright had housemaid and cook, and a young woman from a former parish who was in delicate health, all looking through her drawers for unfindable articles of apparel. She did not do much herself, except stand before the glass arranging her curls, varying the proceedings by running to the door at intervals and exclaiming:

'Now, Bella, dear—now Nurse Mary, you good soul—are those children nearly ready? You know their papa cannot bear their going into church late. And, Bella, will you lend me a pair of your cuffs? and if you have a spare fall—don't take yours off—any old thing will do for me. What a girl it is! I believe, as Mr. Wright says, you would take the gown off your back if you thought any one else wanted it.'

At last, something like order being produced out of chaos, the children trooped downstairs and broke out into the drive. Looking, though faded, pretty and ladylike, Mrs. Wright passed into the drawing-room, and, seeing Colonel Leschelles there, said:

'I am so sorry to have kept you waiting—but there are such a number of us to get ready. No, don't walk with me, please; I must see to the little ones—and children bore you, I know. I am sure they would me, if they were not my own. Bella—Bella, love—Colonel Leschelles will take care of you. Rosie, darling, come and mamma will hold your hand—there's a dear.'

'No,' retorted the dear, clinging to Bella, who carried the gorgeous Prayer-book.

'I'm going to walk with mamma,' said Curran, with a mental eye to future mince-pie and plum-pudding.

'Me too,' instantly shouted the latest arrow in the rectorial quiver, rushing off with infantile perversity

to secure her mother's disengaged hand; and thus, youngest son on one side, youngest daughter on the other, with seven other pledges of affection in front, and Colonel Leschelles and Bella in rear, Mrs. Wright walked through Fisherton, to the admiration of all beholders.

'I think, Miss Miles,' said Colonel Leschelles to his companion, 'that I have had the pleasure of seeing you somewhere before. Your face seems quite familiar to me.'

Bella shook her head.

'You must be mistaken,' she answered, looking up at him with clear, honest, and yet timid eyes as she spoke. 'I should have remembered you had I ever seen you since I was quite a little child. I never did forget any one, I think, unless it might be the strangers who were about me when I had fever in New York,' she added, as if imagining he had possibly been one of them.

'I did not know you had been in New York,' he remarked. 'Are you American by birth, then?'

'Oh, no!' she replied, and a swift, hot flush came up into her face as she said so. 'I went there when I was quite young, with my uncle; but the climate did not suit my health, and so he sent me to a school near Paris, where I stayed till I came here.'

'Then of course we have never met before,' he said; 'and yet I have seen your double somewhere at some time.'

'It must have been a person like me; it could not have been me,' she answered simply.

Upon that subject, at all events, Miss Miles had no reserves. As she owned, so far as she knew, no female relative save her mother, and as her mother was as unlike her as it is ever possible for a mother to be, she felt no anxiety on the subject of her accidental resemblance to any human being.

'Do you like Fisherton?' he

asked, by way of turning the conversation.

'Very much,' she said. 'This is such a pleasant change after school-life.'

'I should have thought it very much like school,' he remarked, with a significant glance ahead.

'You mean the children. Well, perhaps in that way it is. But then there are not so many of them, and they have not been drilled to one pattern. Even when they are naughty they are amusing—perhaps more amusing than at any other time. And for me, this existence means freedom. One can run about and do as one likes—and one gets better things to eat—and one goes out to nice parties sometimes—and Mr. Wright is so kind—and Mrs. Wright has taught me so much—and indeed I shall always love Fisherton—to the last day of my life!'

'See how the old and the young sometimes agree,' he said, with a little grimness in his voice. 'I like Fisherton now very much better than I imagined it possible I should ever like any place again. But here we are at the church.'

There they were indeed, and the bell had done tolling, and Mr. Wright was already in the reading-desk when the family proceeded up the aisle.

Still holding Rosie by the hand, Mrs. Wright entered the square pew, which with some difficulty contained the twelve persons who now entered into possession of that well-cushioned, well-carpeted, well-hassocked domain.

Down on her knees beside her mother plopped the child, wondering exceedingly; and on her knees she remained till the exhortation had begun, when Mrs. Wright, resuming an erect position, placed Rosie, whose eyes were round as peas with astonishment, on a footstool beside her.

Round and round went Miss Rosie's glances. She surveyed the roof, the organ-loft, the congregation, and with the intensest curiosity followed the movements of the sexton, as he ushered late arrivals into their pews.

Then suddenly her eye fell on the clergyman, who was then saying:

'With a pure heart and humble voice, unto the throne of the heavenly grace.'

Miss Rosie, recognising him, cried out in a shrill voice which reached the farthest corner of the church:

'Why, mamma, there's papa in his night-shirt!'

I am bound to say the congregation behaved nobly at this crisis. First they tittered, and then they coughed; but, upon the whole, they confined their feelings to their handkerchiefs, which they stuffed into their mouths.

By the time every one was almost in convulsions, it occurred to Rosie that she had misbehaved herself, and looking at Curran, who knelt beside her, she put her finger inside her lips, and the pair laughed audibly—like the rest.

As for Bella Miles, she rose when the *Venite* commenced, but, unlike the others, she asked Roderick to open the pew door, and walked out of the church, looking like a very ghost.

When she reached home, according to Nurse Mary's account of the proceedings, she fell to laughing and crying on the sofa—laughing till she cried, and crying till she laughed.

'Indeed, ma'am, I thought to put on my bonnet and fetch the doctor from the sermon.'

No doubt the doctor would have liked the interruption; but Bella Miles felt very thankful his devotions had not been disturbed on her account. : :

(To be continued.)

THE DISH OF LAPWINGS À LA TANTALE.'

SIR FRANCIS KITCHENHAM was not a bad man, but his perfect selfishness made him unpatriotic, like his father before him. This latter gentleman had built a mansion in Paris, because he hated the trouble of listening to grumbling tenants on his estates; and his heir was even more of a model absentee than he. Sir Francis bought pictures, never to look at them, much less to lend to charitable exhibitions. He sometimes gave away coppers in the street, but more because they smelt metallic, and the Arabs annoyed him, than from pity. If he had friends to dine with him, it was because he hated eating alone; and, besides, they told him all the news, sang the newest songs, brought the latest quotations of the Bourse, and so saved him from reading the papers or going to theatres or stockbrokers. The restaurateurs of Paris had converted him into a gourmand as inveterate as the hero of Sue's novel upon that sin, and he gloried in it. For many years his English farmers had groaned at that extra percentage which lavishly paid his cook, a Normandy woman of rare gifts in the culinary way. When Brigitte was at work, the exquisite odours from her pots and pans inundated the Avenue Brillat-Savarin, and mingled with the floral perfumes of the Parc Monceau. Future prime ministers even travelled from the dusty garrets by the Luxembourg to munch their *gâteau 'pour trois-s'* in that savoury atmosphere, and a prospectus was once issued in the 'Canard sans Politique' for an Asylum of Dyspeptics in a neighbouring house.

Sir Francis was proud of his

cook, who was equally his house-keeper, and never tired of chanting her praises to his two cronies, M. Fourmillion, retired editor of the *Bouche de Gargantua*, 'journal des deux mondes épicuriens,' and Colonel Haggis, a dubiously warlike gentleman, who, though under fifty, gave it out that he had figured prominently at Waterloo. Though Brigitte was not comely, and looked a good sixty years old, this trio always hailed her with enthusiasm as she appeared at dessert, a shining knife in her apron-string, her *cordons bleu*, and a silver ladle 'at the carry.'

Though Sir Francis's name was often hinted at in the *chroniques* of Jules Lecomte, Noriac, Véron, and the other purveyors of gossip, as an English eccentric after the pattern of Seymour, Hertford, Fraser, and so on, his gastronomic reputation was known but to a chosen few. It was from one of the most eminent of these acquaintances that came the following shell into the camp of peace, a letter thus worded:—

'Offices of the "Almanach du Goût."

'DEAR MILORD,—The bearer is a wonderful *cuisinier*. Not a mere man of talent, but a genius, ripe as Dumas himself. When once you shall have tried him you will overtire him, and learn then how much lusciousness there is in life. Wishing you a hearty appetite, believe me, &c.,

'CHARLES MONSELET.'

Sir Francis was at table with his two boon companions. The bearer of the missive had announced himself with a long and strong pull of the doorbell, still ringing. He was a surprising

object, being full six feet in height, broad-shouldered, and imposing. But, quite the opposite of all *chefs* past, present, and to come, this man seemed to have ruined his constitution prematurely by some dreadful task. His sallow, wrinkled phiz resembled that of a Saint Laurence by a Goya or Ribera. The three feasters' astonishment was complete, as they vainly sought for the plump, unctuous cheeks and saponaceous smile usually the appanage of the profession.

'Are you really the gentleman recommended to me?' inquired Sir Francis.

'Really, milord, and my name's Blague, at your lordship's service.'

'A pretty name,' remarked the host, who never liked to offend people, in speech at least; 'but, if you will excuse my surprise, I must say you look rather—rather, you know, fagged out for a good cook.'

M. Blague sighed like the Dying Gladiator at the moment of declining life 'under the thumb.' 'My wrinkles are so many stripes won upon the battlefield. One attains the unreachable only by dint of superhuman struggles—'

Colonel Haggis, who was sipping the bubbles off a thimbleful of Glenlivet, swallowed a drop the wrong way and shook the room with his cough; the ex-editor felt his heart climb up into his mouth, and the host did not even try to understand this oration.

'I see you are a man of merit,' he hastened to say, 'and my regret is stupendous that I cannot accept your offer. My household is complete.'

'Perfectly complete,' observed the ex-editor.

'Completely complete,' echoed the Scotchman.

'I feel as if a thunderbolt had hashed me,' replied the suppliant; 'but your decision is made before

you know what I can do. Now I do know, your lordship, your tastes and fancies. I have divined what direction your superior appetite takes, and I can anticipate its tendencies and feed it on the march! You must overlook my persistence, because men like myself must have masters of your sort. With my prophetic eye I have seen that I shall end my days under your lordship's roof.'

'But the present mistress of the kitchen?' muttered the ex-editor, alarmed at a rustle of petticoats at the door.

'She may stay,' said M. Blague, loftily, as Cæsar spoke of the Serpent of the Nile, 'to peel the potatoes. I may even let her roll out the crust for meat pies and mince the cold mutton—'

A peal of angry exclamations came in at the keyhole: Brigitte was listening. This alarm recalled her master to a sense of the situation. 'Enough, sir,' said he in a curt tone. 'Your obstinacy offends me. I am astonished that M. Monselet, so careful about introducing people, should have sent you up the Boulevard Malesherbes.'

'I have sent him up a dinner many's the time,' retorted the stranger unaffectedly.

There was a pause after this clincher, during which the master of the Hôtel Kitchenham stared at the ceiling.

'I beg to make one delicate remark,' continued M. Blague. 'Love of gain does not impel me. I am aware you are vastly rich, and I am downright glad of that from my point of view. But I want little to subsist upon: give me twenty francs a-month, and what your valet will share with me in cast-off clothes; or, for additional argument, you may do your own marketing.'

'That's not my style,' answered

Sir Francis, somewhat stung; for he looked twice at a napoleon before spending it. 'So you would labour in sheer love of art?'

'I would,' responded the mysterious visitor. 'I am a veteran on the retired list. Though not yet forty, I have been through the fire too often. The toasting-fork is as fatal as a bayonet; and I'd as lief stand before the mouth of a mitrailleuse as that of an oven.'

'You win upon one on better acquaintance,' said Sir Francis, quite genially, 'and you speak of your calling like a true expert. I am therefore distressed at bowing you out; but once telling is as good as ten times, and it's impossible.'

'Surely you won't send me away without a taste of my quality,' urged M. Blague, with the despair of a drowning man. 'I don't ask a month's trial—only a week's—nay, but a day's. I ask for no pay; for this is now a question for my own self-satisfaction.'

The Lucullus, bewitched in spite of himself, was relenting, when the Colonel, seeing the door shake behind which the jealous cook was posted, trod on his toe. Sir Francis returned under the yoke and shook his head.

'Ah!' said M. Blague, with a bitter smile, 'you are afraid of your housekeeper. She has her eye upon you from close by here, and you, oh, milord without a backbone, you quiver before your cook like a jelly. Tell me, is she the woman to simmer you Algerian locusts in *crème de bulbul*?'

'I daresay,' answered the Englishman, with a moistening lip.

'And can she do Persian caftans in blended spices?'

'I fancy so,' answered the Englishman, nibbling the tip of his tongue.

'But can she send up the giant butterflies of Brazil on toast of sponge-cake *au naturel*?'

'I'm pretty sure.'

'Then,' proceeded M. Blague, without wincing, 'she stands on a higher pedestal than I imagined. Very well, milord, I see that I am losing my time, and I leave you. You must kindly overlook my intrusion, gentlemen.'

The great cook took his hat, and moved towards the door; but his step grew slower and more slow, till stopping, he staggered, and suddenly masking his face with his emaciated fingers, he exclaimed:

'Ah! I see that you know all. I have been betrayed, or how else could you be so ferociously cruel as to be deaf to my entreaty? You plunge me into the cauldron of Fatality! So must it be, and I will fulfil my destiny! I must carry out the feats which are revealed to me by my science. Know ye that I have already attained the climax of cookery, the acme of appetite, yea, the *summum bonum* of palatelic raptures! Solomon Caus must build his engine, Palissy must bake his platters, Fulton must propel his steamboat—and my secret oozes out of me at my fingers' ends. I would have consented to anything; but you have rejected me. Now I shall tickle your palates with the promise of my unheard-of discovery, and my terms shall be: a thousand francs a-month, perquisites, pin-money, my tailor and bootmaker's bill liquidated, and I shall serve you only once a-year, one single, solitary, unique time! For that one space I shall have ten thousand francs bonus; and on the following day I shall go off on my holiday of eleven months nine-and-twenty days, and in leap year one day more!'

'What do you mean?—what does he mean?' faltered Sir Francis, losing his Britannic coolness. 'The man plays the mischief with my gullet. He titillates me, he worries

me. By George, he's spoilt my dinner!"

'Haven't you understood me?' queried M. Blague mournfully. 'Your obtuseness is a national evil. I am the sole inventor of "Lapwings garnished with Fern-seed à la Tantalus!"'

The ex-editor of 'The Gargantua Mouth' seemed struck; for he rose in his easy-chair and studied the speaker's livid countenance in stupefaction. But the host, without reflecting, pounced upon the cook with juvenile petulancy.

'I want nothing from you, sirrah!' ejaculated he; 'I don't even care to hear of your dishes. For the love of heaven take yourself away! Be off, or I'll send for the *sergents-de-ville*!'

'Fare thee well, O son of Albion!' returned the snubbed inventor, abruptly departing. 'Thou resemblest the savage to whom an appetising oyster first opened his mouth. Take a last long look at me, for me you will never see again. But you will learn too soon what an Apician morsel you have spurned aloof. Farewell—I am sorry for you! But Waterloo is avenged!'

M. Fourmillion sprang up to pursue him; but the Scotchman cannily caught him by the napkin spread over his waistcoat.

'Let the crazy de'il go,' said he.

'By all means,' said Sir Francis. 'I repeat, he has done for my dinner.'

But M. Fourmillion, though not an agile man, broke away, and trundled down the stairs. The *concierge* had seen the stranger stream past him like a shadow, murmuring, 'My secret will go with me to the infernal kitchen!'

The ex-editor, frightened at this despairing threat, returned to find his friends astounded at his activity.

'That knavish fellow,' he explained, 'offered us the Lapwings

à la Tantale. I've heard of them somewhere as a rare and curious dish. I have been bored to write a page or two for the "Gourmand's Almanach," and I would like that recipe.'

'Pish!' said the Scotchman, 'Did you notice the extraordinary pretensions of the daft body? He wanted to cook for the pure love of the thing, one while, and then he prated graspingly like a Carême.'

'It's strange,' remarked the host; 'but we need not be uneasy when we have Brigitte at hand.'

The woman made her appearance with a bunch of flowers for a breastknot. That was of good augury, for she decked herself out only on days of contentment. She curtseyed, stood primly, and tranquilly waited.

'Brigitte,' said Sir Francis, 'you are a blue ribbon of the cookery race. The *chef* of the Café Anglais calls you into consultation on decisive days, and Brébant's would win an European reputation with a tithe of your skill. I have banked all my trust in you, and believe it is soundly placed.'

The two parasites nodded.

'How does it happen, therefore,' he proceeded, 'that you have never let us discuss lapwings garnished with fern-seed, Tantalus-fashion?'

Brigitte seemed to have just arrived by the *Guppian* Way; but, after pondering, she answered sagely:

'I never heard tell of them, milord.'

'Just learn, will you? The present company will be kind enough to call to dinner on Thursday. We'll have the lapwings in the second course.'

On the appointed day a certainly excellent repast came to the board, but the birds were not present.

'The fact is, milord,' said the

cook, 'I have inquired after them of a hundred different parties. Not one ever heard of the dish. There was a waiter in the Palais Royal, at a fixed-price house, who offered me the recipe for five francs. I was fool enough to hand over the money for a scrap of paper, which said, "C'est du taureau irlandais saupoudré de pierre de Blarnéi."'

'Impossible!' said the ex-editor.

'Irish bull, sprinkled with blarney-stone in powder!' repeated the absentee noble, in disgust. 'Why, the rogue swindled you. Brigitte, I must speak to you plainly. You owe it to my cuisine, mine honour, and your own reputation, to overcome this obstacle. Attend to this mysterious preparation before everything, and don't be misled by cock-and-Irish-bull recipes. We all will hunt up the lapwings ourselves, as well.'

'Ahem!' coughed the Scotchman. 'I have read in Robbie Burns, or mebbe it was Shakespeare, that fern-seed is not easily found; and lapwings may be just as hard to catch as phoenixes. I am a bit perplexed, now, that you got quit of the queer soul in a manner so sudden.'

'I have repented already,' returned Sir Francis frankly; 'but, that's done; and, anyway, we shall find him again.'

The next day he drove over the bridge, to see M. Monselet; but that gentleman was 'out' of the 'Almanach des Gourmands' office, and his representative, though well knowing that M. Blague was a wonderfully good cook, could not give his address.

M. Fourmillon left the Colonel to advertise in 'Galignani,' whilst he explored the principal restaurants, asking up the *chef*, and chatting winningly with his lieutenants. At last, one master-cook recalled a clever chap, whom Chevet, the Parisian Fortnum and

Mason, who is also fishmonger and game-purveyor, had engaged. His culinary erudition was Johnsonian; he was a Dumas-Lexicon of eating. The editor found him head waiter at the Grand Hôtel Café. He was an elderly man, as daintily dressed as an English duke on his wedding-day at the Abbey, and sententious as a parliamentary solicitor.

'Lapwings with fern-seed, Tantalus-fashion,' repeated he, after he had heard the other out gravely. 'The name is rather familiar. It is a dish—beyond a doubt—an uncommon dish. I think the Crown Prince called for it at St. Cloud, when they captured a man who named himself the Baron de Brisse.'

'Yes, yes; but what sort of dish is it?'

'Monsieur Fourmillon,' retorted the waiter, drawing himself up to his full height, without rumpling his white tie, 'I take orders, but never touch a plate. I shall consider it as a special favour if you will state, in your article upon me, that I never set foot in a kitchen—never!'

The inquirer tendered his excuses, and departed, as much disappointed as his patron-lord. Meanwhile, the Scotchman had an idea he had won the cup. While at Galignani's, he had premeditatedly offered his mull to the oldest frequenter of the reading-room—a well-preserved character, in military black stock and well-brushed coat of an exploded cut, who is supposed to be correspondent of no end of English journals. He quite warmed up, what with the Regent's mixture and the Colonel's dry recital of his dilemma, and made him clearly repeat the name of the rare dish.

'Strange!' muttered he, between his sneezes. 'I have certainly heard of tantalising dishes; but I don't know of lapfern and wing-

seed among them. But I tell you who can tell you, if anybody in town is able, and that's my old friend who feeds the birds in the Luxembourg Gardens. Try him the first sunny day.'

But this hopeful scent drew blank, too, for the aged philavis even grew angry at the question being put to him, and stormed and gesticulated at 'such "sells" being practised upon a man of his years, who had survived two sieges of Paris, by a foreigner too,' that Colonel Haggis beat a hasty retreat.

'Ah, Blague!' cried Sir Francis, when the three were met, 'thou art avenged!'

Thenceforward the trio lost weight visibly. An Iliad would not comprise their journeys. The advertisement columns on the boulevards and in the journals called for 'Blague,' till the street Arabs caught up the cry. Blague was offered his own terms to 'return to his afflicted' victims; a fortune had been left him by a distant relative; an eccentric English spinster wished to wed a cook of his exact description. All was fruitless; sham Blagues invaded the Parc Monceaux, and were shamefully shown the door, but the Simon Pure was undiscoverable. Unappeased desire haunted the house which had excluded the genius, and robbed the three gluttons of appetite. The consciousness of her shortcomings made Brigitte commit blunders, yea, outrages even, upon the most innocent of white sauces. That famous kitchen was fallen into its sereous days.

M. Fourmillion, as he became lean as in his toilsome student life, recovered his dash and daring of that period. He was the first to rebel against the pangs of indigestion and wasting away. He averred to his friends that he

would not pine into a shadow without a struggle, and announced his intention to travel—to make the tour of the world if need be.

'And I,' observed the Scotchman, quite kindled, 'I will ransack Paris for this secret, and question every soul, from the Armenian at the Library to the cabaret-keeper of the quarries!'

'And I,' said Sir Francis, with a great gulp, as he pushed away his favourite mussels in champagne vinegar, untasted, 'I will go to London, where everything arrives eventually, they say.'

They did not name their missions, they promised nothing, but they touched glasses, lifting their hands in concert much as the three Swiss pledge themselves in the opera.

Several months went by; London was amazed at the appearance of the Frenchified Kitchenham, but soon forgot him when it was eating-houses he spent his time within. To him came the correspondence of his allies. Not one valuable grain enriched the plenty of dry chaff unearthed by the Colonel. One day, even, he despairingly wrote: 'M. Loredan Larchey has imparted to me an extract from an unique antique MS. in the library about the blood of a lapwing rendering a man invisible. Does this in any way account for our not finding M. Blague? I fear so.'

M. Fourmillion's letters were pleasanter reading; with his eloquent pen he expatiated upon the kindest works of man. He told of Bordeaux and its wine; Phalsbourg, where peach-stones were made to disgorge prussic acid to flavour cordials; Strasburg and its *pâtés*; Ostend and its oysters; Calcutta and curried chicken; Port Philip and kangaroo steak;

Fiji and pork *à la missionnaire froide*; California and its colossal vegetables; Chicago and prairie fowl; Silver City and buffalo hump; Albany and its 'beef'; New York and its baked shad, broiled river bass, strawberry short-cake, and Maillard's ices; Boston and its brown bread and baked pork and beans; Baltimore and its oysters; Charleston and its mammoth prawns; Long Island and its 'chowder,' and clams, 'hard and soft shell'; the West Indies and their fruit; the Cunarders and 'Irish stew'; Liverpool and the first real English beefsteak after coming off the steamer; and London with green-goose, roast beef, and pheasant at Kitchenham House, for the finish.

M. Fourmillion ate these alone, for the master, tired of his native country already, had gone to Arcachon Spa, committing slow suicide by eating that ideal sardine, the *royan*, and the muddy mullet, that woodcock of the waters.

Sir Francis had made the acquaintance of several bathers, congenial spirits who threw stones into the waves until they had appetite enough to do justice to the spread at the hotel. According to good old custom, mine host took the head of the table to preside. One day he got as whole seas over as David's sow. As he lolled his head in his arm-chair, his right-hand man heard him mumble:

'Don't leave me! stay with me for ever; make yourselves at home! drink away, boys. "For he's a jolly good fellow," and shall have anything you call for—anything you like for themselves! Will you have herring and point? "Nid de jument poulinière au lait de pigeon?" or lapwings *à la Tantalé*, or any other tail? Give your orders, gen'lemen, give your—ha, ha, ha!'

Sir Francis was sobered in an instant. He reeled to the door, and with a pretty steady hand scribbled matter for two telegrams. It was the less difficult because the message was only the one word, 'Come!'

In two days the Colonel, and in three days the ex-editor, were shaking his hand. By special favour they were admitted to seats at supper at the hotel-keeper's table. It was a sociable banquet, where the ripe old wines of La Gironde were quaffed freely. During dessert the Scotchman craftily began the attack.

'Ah—h—h!' said he, 'that is indeed a bonny set-out. Your idea of a bill of fare is logically and profoundly thought over, and you've carried out the notion perfectly. There is nothing wanting, positively nothing.'

'There might be a trifle in the way of improvement,' insinuated M. Fourmillion, suavely.

'Do you mean the—the—you know?' said the Englishman.

'Yea.'

'Why what could be altered for the better?' said Boniface, more annoyed than he cared to show.

'Well, don't you think,' continued the man from the Land of Cakes, 'that in lieu of yonder snipe-pies flanked with ortolans—as we had game previously—another centre dish would have looked better? I don't criticise, but it struck me that some—lapwings in fernseed, *à la Tantalus*, for instance——'

'Oh, indeed!' observed the hotel-keeper in an icy tone.

The three accomplices glanced at each other.

'It is far from my mind to wound your feelings,' the Colonel hastened to say. 'We are already regular boon companions, so we may speak openly. Don't you

agree with me that lapwings and fernseed garnish——'

'I don't know any such thing,' replied the host, boldly.

'Really?'

'I never heard of such fowl being cooked.'

So much impudence shocked the hearers, who blushed red to the very whites of their eyes.

'How does it happen then,' retorted the Englishman smartly, 'that you spoke of them a couple of days ago, when you laboured under so pretty a sunstroke from that lively old sauterne?'

'You must be under some error,' replied the hotel proprietor.

'And why do you look so troubled if you were not trying to gull us? You do know the dish of lapwings, and perhaps it was the celebrated M. Blague who initiated you into the great mystery.'

'Blague!' reiterated the man, staring.

'Don't deny it!'

'I have no need to deny. Have I got to defend myself? You are under my roof, gentlemen. I offer you a meal, and you foot the bill. The simplest thing in the world. My reputation is at stake, and you are able to appreciate me; that's the tie betwixt us. I feel capable of my grandest efforts for you, within the bounds of what is possible, of course. Do you wish to overstep the circle of ordinary cookery? Tell me as much frankly, and I'll do marvels. What do you say to a sacred monkey, roast, with hasheesh sauce? Or would you prefer a shell-shedding lobster, on dip-toast, smothered in curry cream? I will perform these feats with my own hands, and will have Dr. Bain-Marie of the Chalybeate Springs at hand, so as to guard against accidents. But don't talk nonsense to me.'

'Eh, roast monkey, with ha-

sheesh,' muttered Colonel Haggis, pulling at his sandy moustache.

'Soft-shell lobster in curry cream!' faltered the ex-editor, going over to the tempter.

'You are a weak-kneed collection of demoralised surrenderers,' cried Sir Francis, forced to coin epithets equal to the situation; 'mere devourers of unsettled coffee and steak broiled in its own juice! What are such commonplaces to me? I want lapwings à la Tantalus! and Tantalian lapwing I mean to have!'

Upon this vociferation several waiters came in, and with praise-worthy promptitude ranged themselves behind their master. He, flushed with anger, rose slowly, and with admirable self-command, uttered these commendable words:

'My lord and gentlemen, you are here in a fair-dealing and honourable house. I make my money by feeding people well, at moderate prices.' ('Hear, hear!' from the waiter who 'spoke ze Anglis.') 'I welcomed you with pleasure; you paid handsomely, and so I was glad you put up here. But after this public scandal, after what has happened between us, I beg you to accept my resignation as host.'

'Do you mean to put us out?' inquired the ex-editor, who thought him that his name in connection with a duel with an hotel-keeper would perhaps double the Almanach's circulation that year.

'No, monsieur; this is merely a parting. Every man is master of his own conscience. I could not maintain amicable relations with you again.'

'But the matter can be explained,' interposed the Colonel.

'There has been too much talk already, sir; pray let the matter rest here, for all our sakes.'

'Do you fancy for one moment,'

blurted out Sir Francis, the British lion's heart at last swelling with rage, 'that we are going to leave without a row?'

'I trust so,' returned the landlord, with a frigid smile, which almost sufficed to *frapper* the wine.

Not only had the disturbance summoned up the kitchen retainers, but some fishermen had dropped into the hotel. The cook's subordinates had their knives in their girdles, ready to leap out, so affected were their bearers by the landlord's manner. Colonel Haggis took in the situation with a Dugald-Dalgetty air, and suddenly rose to his feet, advising his companions to go to the neighbouring hotel.

'Your luggage shall follow you instantler,' postscripted the host. 'But, if I may advise you, I should say, Don't make a long stay hereabouts!'

The removal took place without hindrance. Early next morning the new landlord knocked them up to express his delight at having their custom; but he gave them to understand that his rooms were all let to a very rich and very large Spanish family, of neutral politics, which had been bombarded out of their property between the Carlists and the Alfonsists.

'A nod is as good as a blink,' observed Colonel Haggis. 'My opinion is, we had best get into civilised parts—Bordeaux, for instance.'

'How pat it falls,' struck in the host; 'the stage-coach is at the door. I'll book three places.'

In a couple of hours the trio plunged into the concourse of bustling people in St. John's station at Bordeaux. They had spoken but little during the drive, for they were as devoid of fancies as the plains they crossed. All their hopes were blighted, and

their journeys useless. They were walking in Indian file, or like ducks in a thunderstorm, bag in hand, hunting up the buffet, tripped up by the luggage barrows, jostled by fellow-passengers, shouldered aside by the porters. A scream pierced their ears; a long train was streaking out of the station; the three Werthers sorrowfully eyed it. Suddenly Colonel Haggis uttered a cry, unintelligible to most of its hearers. 'Auld cloutie!' said he; and, dropping his sword-cane and bag, he shot through the throng like a pea from a hot shovel, crossed the metals, grasped the rail at the end of the last car, and disappeared at the tail of the train, with his legs and body trailing out at an angle of a few degrees from the horizon, like a new danger signal! His two friends exchanged a look of wonder, when a faint cry echoed under the station's lofty vault:

'Shall—telegraph—refreshment bar!'

They comprehended, and verily their faith was rewarded with this document:—

'Railways Telegraphs. HAGGIS, Toulouse. Handed in, 2 P.M. TO QUITCHINHEIM, buffet, St. John Station, Bordeaux. Blague nailed seen spoken to come on to Marseilles.'

Sir Francis and M. Fourmillion uttered a dignified but enthusiastic whoop of joy, and fainted in each other's arms. The barmaid in chief, who had fondly imagined that the three hours' stay there of the Anglican noble portended an early offer of his hand, his mansion in Cranbourne Alley, and his villa at Mile End, tossed off a glass of third-class sherry, and was taken home in a cab, moaning something about 'loss of illusions when we are young.' She was forty-nine to a second.

Meanwhile the revived hunters

of the cook had taken train to Marseilles, where the Colonel, his face bruised, his eyes blackened, and both arms in a sling, was waiting at the station. Spite of his dilapidated aspect, his eyes sparkled and his step was light. Ten years of his age were lifted off him.

'All right,' said he, shrinking back from shaking hands with them. 'I see you are looking for my man, but he is not here. Things don't always move as we wish. A setting hen never waxes fat. Who lives till the morrow shall see. The well-laid plans of men and mice oft gang——'

'Gang large enough of proverbs,' interrupted Sir Francis. 'Just let us know what has passed.'

'Excuse me. What did you think of my departure as a specimen of abrupt disappearance? I have been up before a magistrate, and forced to pay a fine. But what of that? I had seen my man. Blague was in the train that was starting. You saw me grasp my opportunity. I have gone two leagues on a buffer, and been fined for *entering* a railway carriage in motion. I have caught a beastly cold in the head; but that is a mere detail. At the first station I darted at the compartment wherein my prize travelled first-class. The porter said it was taken, and I was thrust into the next. At every stoppage I watched the door. It never opened—not even for refreshment—for he carries a spirit cooking apparatus, and cooks his meals on the road, the artful dog! At Agen he did step out, and with him a pompous, ponderous, surly German—a forbidding character. I hovered round them, but they gave me the cold shoulder. No matter again! We resumed our journey. I shall not give you the

entire tale of my ups and downs in fears and hopes. Blague bears no grudge. He accepted my apologies, but he is engaged. In vain I offered him a premium. The Prussian is an army contractor who supplied portable sausages to his countrymen, and is immeasurably rich. He had never known what a stomach was until he fell in with Blague the inimitable, and he has made him his sole heir. I did not press the point, but my winsomest phrases have been exerted to captivate his confidence—perhaps his friendship.'

'Splendid!' said Sir Francis; 'and as regards the famous dish?'

'There was the rub. I did not dare risk the mention. M. Blague seems to be suspicious, for he smiled queerly as we conversed. I waited for your reinforcements before giving battle, thinking I should feel stronger with such supports. He is coming to breakfast at the "Hotel of Marseilles and of the Universe."'

Blague was as punctual as a king at the tryst. He walked in like an ordinary person. He put my lord and M. Fourmillion quite at their ease, though he rather daunted them. Colonel Haggis cracked a mild joke about the modest little dinner he 'set before the king' of cooks, though really the *chef* of the 'H. M. and U.' had outdone himself. The editor related the most piquant anecdotes of Dumas, Dr. Véron, Joliet, and the like; and Sir Francis actually made a pun which Sydney Smith would not have disclaimed. At dessert, M. Blague rose to speak, the others being more or less incapable of joining the Good Templars.

'Gentlemen,' he said, 'you must credit me with enough sense to have seen through the motive of

your asking me here. I have forgotten the past, but I do not wish to lull you with wild hopes. I shall not promise you what I cannot perform.'

A deathly silence greeted this speech, during which the bubble could be heard to burst on the beaker's brim, and a fly to buzz over the tarts on the sideboard.

'Your regret has been publicly proclaimed, for you have appealed to me in the press. That is a claim on my gratitude. My reason for silence is that I had withdrawn from the world to end my days in *La Trappe*.' He laid an unaccountable stress upon the word. 'Unhappily, urgent solicitations, my yielding nature, and my ambition once more to carry out my exalted ideas, drew me again into the world. Baron Wüstling, my friend and master, had tasted my cookery. He had gone through every joy that money procures, and sought for me to impart to him the unsating delights of the table. He penetrated the monastery, offered me half his fortune, and threatened me with his demise at my cell door if I refused to follow him. I gave way, and here I am. The very dish you dream of he besought of me. I would like to let you share his table and there give you a common satisfaction. But that is not to be thought of, for Herr Wüstling cannot bear your Frenchman. It is true I am your compatriot, but a cook is of all countries, and of none when of my rank. On the day after to-morrow'—here Blague's voice quavered—'I mean to execute the dish you wot of—for my master. Give me a week to recover from that Armageddon of Appetite—and then I hope to satisfy you as well.'

Sir Francis's face brightened up. 'Name your own terms,' he said to the great *artiste*.

'My terms are simple,' was the reply. 'You shall pay me one hundred thousand francs, or—if you account that dear—simply walk out of the dining-room without even a word of thanks.'

The three friends, even to the Colonel, reddened. The Englishman felt a twinge as he thought of his farmers, perhaps compelled to travel third-class when they should go up to London for the Cattle Show; and of his colliers, perhaps forced to renounce champagne and concertinas; but he bravely overcame that sentimental hesitation.

'Our thanks will consist, Monsieur Blague, in my counting you out one hundred thousand-pound Bank of England notes.'

'Ah! milord, you are worthy to indulge in such a luxury!' said Blague enthusiastically. 'It is a bargain. Now allow me to attend to my duties as well in your interest as my master's.'

Baron Wüstling, because of his nationality, had found living in French hotels unpleasant. He had therefore taken a whole house. During all the following day our three gourmands hovered round it. Blague remained indoors; but a multitude of kitchen attendants never ceased running out and in to collect comestibles from the dealers far and near.

Sir Francis gave a juvenile kettle-skimmer a five-franc piece to tell him what he was stirring. He related that the *chef* had locked himself up in the kitchen, into which the provisions he ordered were passed through a wicket. 'It smelt jolly good,' was *l'envoi* of the lad's information.

The momentous day arrived, at least for the Prussian, and the three watchers were struck by the appropriately solemn silence and stillness fallen upon the dwelling. No one came forth, the gateway

remained sealed up, the chimneys, which had smoked all night like a Dutchman, smoked no more, and the house seemed untenanted.

At five the Prussian dined. Six, then seven struck, and darkness was coming on. Sir Francis questioned the spies he had stationed around the mansion; for he felt uneasy. He could not sleep without shaking Blague's hand before retiring.

Suddenly, distant outcries arose. An unwonted tumult was audible, as if many persons were tumbling downstairs over one another. The mansion doors flew open; a number of servants scattered in all directions, calling out for a doctor.

'I am a medical man,' said Sir Francis promptly. 'I am Dr. Parr, inventor of the pills from whose boxes three centuries look down upon us, and these are my assistants.'

He dragged his friends into the Prussian's abode, rushing down the stairs by a sure instinct into the kitchen. He opened the door, and beheld, among the cooks, turnspits, potato-peelers, and bottle-washers, the cold and pallid face of the unrivalled Blague, with clenched teeth, but the eyes still glowing with unutterable pride and triumph.

'Ha!' ejaculated the Englishman, 'what a mighty secret this Prometheus must have wratched from the epicurean Olympus!'

The ex-editor bent over the *chef*, but rose shaking his head.

'He will sully no more stewpans with his broth.'

'Gone!' muttered the Englishman, 'and left no trace behind.'

'Stay,' said the Colonel, who had been peering round; 'here is his writing on the wall.'

And, in fact, upon the white plaster a stick of charcoal had inscribed these lines:—

'There is nothing new in France

—only one cook less, and one Prussian no more!—*BLAGUE.*'

'All is lost!' moaned Fourmillion, wringing his hands. 'Oh, what a grand soul has been served up to the Molochian table of Immortality!'

'Stop!' said Kitchenham, more practical; 'all is not lost. There's the German.'

The three shot up into the dining-room.

Before a sumptuous table, covered with a red damask cloth, glittering with silver and china, Herr Wüstling was expanding in a cosy arm-chair. His features were illumined with an expression of ineffable gratification, somewhat tempered with a charming surprise. An enormous Sèvres dish spread out its soft milky-white surface before him, over which his chubby hand, affectionately embracing a piece of bread, was slowly travelling, so as to collect conscientiously the last and minutest fragments which might still linger there. As the intruders bounded in, the ogre swallowed this gather-all, and his closing eyes seemed to emit one farewell and portentous wink.

'*O, gänzlich hintergangen!*' he uttered, in a very throaty voice.

'That's it!' shouted Sir Francis, pointing to the platter cleared by the Teutonic Jack Sprat, and stretching out his hand to seize it.

The Prussian was beyond opposing this impoliteness. His head sloped back, his eyes closed tight, and he smiled as he snored melodiously. He saw and heard nothing in his gastronomical ecstasy.

'Let him slumber,' said the Frenchman enviously. 'He is in no condition to answer us. Oh! and these are the men who thought to fry Paris in its own juice!'

'His nap will be over to-mor-

row,' said the Englishman excitedly, 'and then our day will come. My friends, just sniff this plate! What a novel aroma!—what a tempting revelation!—what a *sui generis* mystery! He haan't left even a crumb soaked in the sauce, the shark!'

'Calm yourself,' interposed the Scotchman, 'and put down that dish; for we might get arrested, if caught with it. There's only one way out of this house. Let's hire a good roomy hackney coach with a lame nag, and spend the night in it here. Herr Warst Thing—I beg his pardon, Wüstling—cannot escape us. I'll bribe him to speak with a promise of caller herring! We will rebuild the temple, remodel the entire porker. Was it not with a funny-bone that Professor Owen reconstructed the *pleuro-iosauros*?'
* * * * *

At six in the morning, Herr Wüstling woke up and made his will, leaving all his property to the

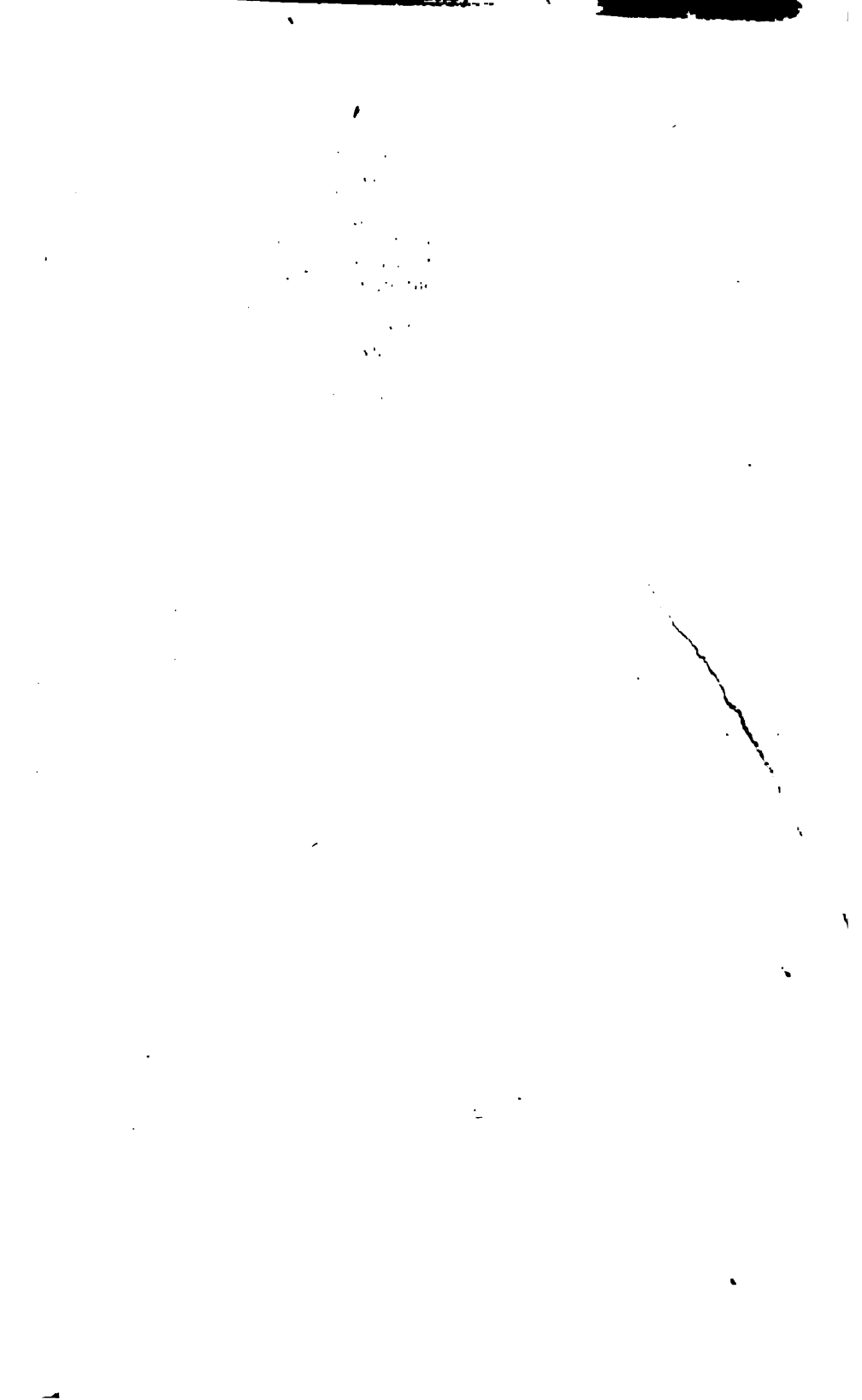
charity fund of the exiled Alsations and Lorrainers. At seven he threw himself out of the window, and, striking the top of the hackney coach below, had all the breath knocked out of his weighty body. At five minutes later Sir Francis Kitchenham lost his wits, and was taken to London to be cured. He never was cured; but he is quite harmless. He is that silver-haired gentleman in the claret coat, buff waistcoat, and plaid trousers, who escapes from the ward of his volunteer keeper, the military Scotch gentleman, to join the children under the oaks in Kensington Gardens making dirt pies. Colonel Haggis never interferes until he gets much too persistent in forcing his earthy pastry upon bystanders, and crying:

'This is proof positive I have discovered the secret of the celebrated Monsieur Blague; for these are the genuine Lapwings garnished with fernseed *à la Tantale*.'

HENRY L. WILLIAMS.









Drawn by Dower Wilson.]

A CHASSE-STUDIO.

GEORGE ELIOT IN DERBYSHIRE.

MANY critical articles have been written on the works of George Eliot, and amongst the lords and ladies of letters there is not much doubt now about the eminent position in literature of the author of 'Middlemarch.' In fiction, the novels of George Eliot are unrivalled as studies of English country life, and they are given to us in quiet, subtle sentences that will supply many future writers with their best phrases. These works have helped to make the English language richer and purer. They are the best specimens of powerful, simple English since Shakespeare. Many authors attempt to prove their strength by drenching our strong Saxon words in pools of modern mud, and then presenting us with strange compositions about impossible people. It is difficult to understand the works of such writers; and when, after much mental vexation, we fancy we have hit the real meanings, we often realise that we have wasted our time, and that the little kernels of sense do not repay us for the great trouble of cracking the huge rhetorical and mystical nuts. In the works of George Eliot we do not find any trickery of this kind. She has not spent her time in trying to hide her weakness, but in drawing marvellous pictures of life as she has seen it. She has given us her thoughts of ordinary men and women she has met, and she has talked to us of the unromantic places in which they have lived. She has not painted noble knights with nodding plumes, nor ladies pining in mysterious castles. She has been content to draw people who for the most part are neither very good nor very bad. She has taken

her characters from that very large majority of our fellow-countrymen of the insignificant stamp described in the fifth chapter of 'Amos Barton':—

'At least eighty out of a hundred of your adult male fellow-Britons returned in the last census are neither extraordinarily silly, nor extraordinarily wicked, nor extraordinarily wise; their eyes are neither deep and liquid with sentiment, nor sparkling with suppressed witticisms; they have probably had no hairbreadth escapes or thrilling adventures; their brains are certainly not pregnant with genius, and their passions have not manifested themselves at all after the fashion of a volcano. They are simply men of complexions more or less muddy, whose conversation is more or less bald and disjointed. Yet these commonplace people—many of them—bear a conscience, and have felt the sublime prompting to do the painful right; they have their unspoken sorrows and their sacred joys; their hearts have perhaps gone out towards their first-born, and they have mourned over the irreclaimable dead. Nay, is there not a pathos in their very insignificance—in our comparison of their dim and narrow existence with the glorious possibilities of that human nature which they share.'

It is in the 'Scenes of Clerical Life' that we get the early impressions of the writer; and if we turn to her last work, we shall find that they have not deserted her.

In 'Adam Bede' she reminds us that our fellow-mortals must be accepted as they are. We can neither straighten their noses, nor brighten their wit, nor rectify their dispositions; and she tells us that it is these people amongst whom our life is passed that it is needful we should tolerate, pity, and love: it is these more or less ugly, stupid, inconsistent people whose movements of goodness we should be able to admire—for whom we should cherish all possible hopes, all possible patience.

'And I would not, even if I had the choice, be the clever novelist who could create a world so much better than this, in which we get up in the morning to do our daily work, that you would be likely to turn a harder, colder eye on the dusty streets and the common green fields—on the real breathing men and women, who can be chilled by your indifference or injured by your prejudice; who can be cheered and helped onward by your fellow-feeling, your forbearance, your outspoken brave justice.' So she is content to tell her simple story, without trying to make things seem better than they are; dreading nothing but falsity, which, in spite of one's best efforts, there is reason to dread. 'Falsehood is so easy, truth so difficult. The pencil is conscious of a delightful facility in drawing a griffin—the longer the claws, and the larger the wings, the better; but that marvellous facility which we mistook for genius is apt to forsake us when we want to draw a real un-exaggerated lion.' It is for this rare, precious quality of truthfulness that she delights in many Dutch paintings, which lofty-minded people despise. Therefore, she asks, let us always have men ready to give the loving pains of a life to the faithful representing of commonplace things—men who see beauty in these commonplace things, and delight in showing how kindly the light of heaven falls on them. 'There are few prophets in the world; few sublimely beautiful women; few heroes. I can't afford to give all my love and reverence to such rarities: I want a great deal of those feelings for my everyday fellow-men, especially for the few in the foreground of the great multitude whose faces I know, whose hands I touch, for whom I have to make

way with kindly courtesy.' These sentences may be taken as a key to nearly all George Eliot has written.

Dickens revealed the heroism of humble life, but he did so with exaggerated colours, and for his study he took specimens of mankind so rare that we can scarcely think of them as men and women who have lived in this world. Thackeray, though not so attractive as his rival, is often nearer to life. In the novels of George Eliot, however, there is more true painting than in either or both. She reminds us more of Fielding than of any other writer. With greater success than other novelists, she has shown us ordinary men and women as we have seen them. Take, for instance, Molly, the housemaid, in 'Adam Bede.' She has a turn-up nose and a protuberant jaw. The ordinary novelist would not be likely to give much attention to her unless for criminal purposes. But George Eliot shows us that she is a tender-hearted girl, and, as Mrs. Poyser said, a jewel to look after the poultry; but her stolid face showed nothing of this maternal delight, any more than a brown earthenware pitcher will show the light of the lamp within it.

It has been said that Shakespeare made the laws of his own land serve for all nations, and that he also made descriptions of his native county serve for all countries. We wish now to show or suggest that George Eliot has taken the greater part of her material from one county. It was, we think, about the hills and dales of romantic Derbyshire that she met many of the characters that fill her novels.

At the outset of our examination we will not fly at the strongest proof. We will begin with one word. It is 'nesh.' You will not.

find it in an ordinary dictionary, and you may go from one end of England to the other without hearing it in conversation. Still, you may often hear the word in Derbyshire, and you will find it in the works of George Eliot. 'She gets more *nash* and *dillicat* than iver,' says Mr. Bates of Hester, in 'Mr. Gilfil's Love Story.' In 'The Mill on the Floss,' Luke says to Maggie, 'Don't fret, miss; they're *nash* things, them lop-eared rabbits—they'd happen ha' died, if they'd been fed.' In Derbyshire, people also say 'gell' for 'girl,' and they have the same peculiarity in the novels of George Eliot. In 'Janet's Repentance,' Mrs. Jerome says, 'Hush, hush, Lizzie! little *gells* must be seen, and not heard.' Silas Marner too says, 'Eh, if it wasn't a sin to the lads to wish 'em made different, bless 'em, I should ha' been glad for one of 'em to be a little *gell*.' In 'The Mill on the Floss,' Mrs. Tulliver says, 'O dear, O dear, Maggie! what are you thinkin' of, to throw your bonnet down there? Take it upstairs, there's a good *gell*.' In Derbyshire one may often hear also 'chanch,' for 'chance,' There is an instance in 'Felix Holt, the Radical.' Tommy Tounsem says, 'I shall live at publics and see the world, and pick up 'quaintance, and get a *chanch* penny.' At the beginning of 'Adam Bede,' Mr. Carson says to the horseman who approaches the 'Donnithorne Arms,' 'I'm not this countryman, you may tell by my tongue, sir; the gentry's hard work to hunderstand 'em. I was brought hup among the gentry, sir, an' got the turn o' their tongue when I was a bye. Why what do you think the folks here says for "hevn't you?"—the gentry, you know, says "hevn't you:" well, the people about here says "hanna yey." It's what they call the dileck as is

spoke hereabout, sir. That's what I've heard Squire Donnithorne say many a time: "it's the dileck," says he.' Mr. Carson was right: there are people in Derbyshire who say 'hanna yey.' There might be many instances given to prove that the 'dileck' of the novels we have mentioned is the 'dileck' of Derbyshire. In 'Scenes of Clerical Life,' we are told that Mrs. Pettifer busied herself with rousing the kitchen fire, which was kept in under a huge 'raker'—a possibility by which the coal of the *Midland counties* atones for all its slowness and white ashes. The scenes of 'Felix Holt' are professedly fixed in the Midland counties. The story comes to us with a couplet from Drayton:—

'Upon the Midlands now the industrious
muse doth fall,
The shires which we the heart of Eng-
land well may call.'

In 'The Mill on the Floss,' Mr. Glegg says, 'Well, well, neighbour Tulliver, you may be right; you may be right:

"When land is gone and money's spent,
Then learning is most excellent."

I remember seeing those two lines wrote on a window at *Buxton*.'

To support the assertion that the work of George Eliot is closely linked with Derbyshire, we get our strongest evidence from 'Adam Bede.' It has often been mentioned by London correspondents that the story is founded on fact, but they have not said much to make good the statement. There are people in Wirksworth who have no doubt that 'Adam Bede' is a story of real life; and they say that they knew Dinah Morris by the name of Elizabeth Evans, and that they knew the brothers Adam and Seth Bede as the brothers William and Samuel Evans. They believe the story is 'wrong' here and there. For

instance, they say that Dinah did not marry Adam, but Seth. George Eliot, in a letter, begs the writer of this article to understand that Dinah Morris was never intended to be a representation of Mrs. Elizabeth Evans; and that any identification of the two (or of any other characters in 'Adam Bede' with real persons) would be protested against as not only false in fact, and tending to perpetuate false notions about art, but also as a gross breach of social decorum. But the story does not end here. We think we have a right to say what we know about William, and Samuel, and Elizabeth Evans. If it turns out that their lives are like the fiction lives of Adam and Seth Bede and Dinah Morris, this is not a reason why we should for ever hold our peace. We do not think we ought to be silent, even though we should now and then be faced by 'curious coincidences.' Elizabeth Evans played an important part in the rise of Methodism. The story of her life deserves a prominent place in the history of the movement. We have heard much about Susanna Wesley, Mary Fletcher, Sarah Ryan, Sarah Crosby, Sarah Lawrence, Lady Fitzgerald, Hester Ann Rogers, Grace Murray, Elizabeth Woolbridge, and the Countess of Huntingdon. We have heard something, too, of Elizabeth Evans. Why should we not hear more? She did probably more real work than most of the women we have mentioned. It is unfair to say that her life is not to be written because it has already been 'done' in fiction. Her name demands a less doubtful and different kind of honour. We do not know why her name should be concealed, or her labours, and birth-place and burial-place. The declaration that the story of such a life cannot be published because it is like the

story of a fiction heroine must be protested against as not only false in fact, and tending to perpetuate false notions about the duty of life, but also a gross breach of common sense.

William Evans, of Ellaston, was a joiner and builder. Considering the place in which he lived, he had a large business, and as he kept well to it, there is not so much known of him as of his brother, who became 'a Methody,' and a preacher. Particulars are given of the life of Samuel Evans in a brochure published in 1859 by Tallant and Co. It is called 'Seth Bede, "the Methody," his Life and Labours; chiefly written by himself.' This little work is now very rare. We have a copy before us. In it we are told that those who are familiar with the county of Derbyshire cannot have failed to notice the extreme simplicity of the inhabitants in the more secluded rural districts, and which the great modern innovator, the rail, has not yet altered in any material degree. We are told that the village referred to as Hayslope, in 'Adam Bede,' may still be seen, but little altered by the hand of time. 'True, the "Methodys" have a handsome chapel there, and the green where Dinah breathed forth holy prayers was enclosed in 1818; but the sign-board of the "Donnithorne Arms" still hangs out, and the red brick hall (now with unpatched windows) is in existence still. The peasantry have not advanced much, and have about the same twang and the same notions as their fathers. It is a slow place that village, where people live on with little exertion and no care.' Samuel Evans was born at Boston, about sixteen miles from Derby, and about four miles from Ashbourne, being pleasantly situated on the Dove. In 1857 it had 475 inhabitants, the sexes being so

nearly balanced, that 287 were males and 288 females. Samuel was born in 1777. We are told that his father was the village carpenter and undertaker, and was 'an honest and respectable man, as things went,'—or 'as this world goes;' but during the last years of his life he passed too much of his time in the village alehouse, to the great grief of his family. His melancholy death made a great impression upon his son Seth. It appears that the poor old man was out very late one night, and, in making his way home, accidentally fell into a brook, where he was found dead the next morning, although scarcely covered with water. In this way, too, Seth loses his father in the novel:—

"Seth, lad, if father isn't come home by the time we've had our breakfast, I think it'll be as well for thee to go over to Treddleson and look after him, and thee canst get me the brass wire I want. Never mind about losing an hour at thy work; we can make that up. What dost say?"

"I'm willing," said Seth. "But see what clouds have gathered since we set out. I'm thinking we shall have more rain. It'll be a sore time for th' hay-making if the meadows are flooded again. The brook's fine and full now: another day's rain 'ud cover the plank, and we should have to go round by the road."

"They were coming across the valley now, and had entered the pasture through which the brook ran.

"Why, what's that sticking against the willow?" continued Seth, beginning to walk faster. Adam's heart rose to his mouth: the vague anxiety about his father was changed into a great dread. . . . This was the first thought that flashed through Adam's conscience, before he had time to seize the coat, and drag out the tall, heavy body. Seth was already by his side, helping him; and when they had it on the bank, the two sons in the first moments knelt and looked with mute awe at the glazed eyes, forgetting that there was need for action—forgetting everything but that their father was dead."

One of Samuel's troubles was that his Methodism was not alto-

gether appreciated at home. He met with a good deal of quiet domestic ridicule. He says, 'My elder brothers often tried to tease me; they entertained High Church principles. They told me what great blunders I made in preaching and prayer; that I had more zeal than knowledge.' But Samuel was ever kind and considerate with his mother and with his brothers. We find Seth surrounded with this home difficulty in the novel:—

"But, mother, thee know'st we canna love just where other folks 'ud have us. There's nobody but God can control the heart of man. I could ha' wished myself as Adam could ha' made another choice, but I wouldn't reproach him for what he can't help, and I'm not sure but what he tries to o'ercome it. But it's a matter as he doesn't like to be spoke to about, and I can only pray to the Lord to bless and direct him."

"Ay, thee't allays ready enough at prayin', but I donna see as thee gets much wi' thy prayin'. Thee wotna get double earnings o' this side Yule. Th' Methodies 'll niver make thee half the man thy brother is, for all they're a-makin' a preacher on thee."

"It's partly truth thee speak'st there, mother," said Seth, mildly; "Adam's far before me, an's done more for me than I can ever do for him. God distributes talents to every man according as He sees good. But thee mustna' undervally prayer. Prayer mayna bring money, but it brings us what no money can buy—a power to keep from sin, and be content with God's will, whatever He may please to send. If thee wouldst pray to God to help thee, and trust to His goodness, thee wouldstna be so uneasy about things."

"Unaisy? I'm i' th' right on't to be unaisy. Thee't gi' away all thy earnings, an' niver be unaisy, as thee't nothin' laid up again' a rainy day. If Adam had been as aisy as thee, he'd niver ha' had no money to pay for thee. Take no thought for the morrow—take no thought—that's what thee't allays sayin'; an' what comes on't? Why, as Adam has to take thought for thee."

"Those are the words o' the Bible, mother," said Seth. "They don't mean as we should be idle. They mean we shouldn't be over-anxious and worretting ourselves about what'll happen to-mor-

row, but do our duty, and leave the rest to God's will."

"Ay, ay, that's the way wi' thee: thee allays makes a peck o' thy own words out o' a pint o' the Bible's. I donna see how thee't to know as 'take no thought for the morrow,' means all that. An' when the Bible's such a big book, an' thee canst read all thro't, an' ha' the pick o' the texes, I canna think why thee dostna pick better words as donna mean so much more nor they say. Adam doesna pick a that'n; I can understan' the tex as he's allays a-sayin', 'God helps them as helps theirsens.'"

"Nay, mother," said Seth, "that's no text o' the Bible. It comes out of a book as Adam picked up at the stall at Tredbleson. It was wrote by a knowing man, but over-worldly, I doubt. However, that saying's partly true; for the Bible tells us we must be workers together with God."

"Well, how'm I to know? It sounds like a tex. But what's th' matter wi' th' lad? Thee't hardly atin' a bit o' supper. Dostna mean to ha' no more nor that bit o' oat-cake? An' thee lookat as white as a flick o' new bacon. What's th' matter wi' thee?"

"Nothing to mind about, mother; I'm not hungry. I'll just look in at Adam again, and see if he'll let me go on with the coffin."

"Ha' a drop o' warm broth?" said Lisbeth, whose motherly feeling now got the better of her "nattering" habit. "I'll set two-three sticks a-light in a minute."

"Nay, mother, thank thee; thee't very good," said Seth, gratefully; and encouraged by this touch of tenderness, he went on: "Let me pray a bit with thee for father, and Adam, and all of us—it'll comfort thee, happen, more than thee think'st."

"Well, I've nothin' to say again' it."

Lisbeth, though disposed always to take the negative side in her conversations with Seth, had a vague sense that there was some comfort and safety in the fact of his piety, and that it somehow relieved her from the trouble of any spiritual transactions on her own behalf.

We read that, destined as Seth Evans was to pass his lifetime in the service of God, it was but fitting that he should have a partner whose face was also set Zionwards, that they might assist each other on their pilgrimage; and Providence ordained that he should be

united to one of the most pure-minded and holy women that ever adorned the church of Christ on earth. 'It was at Ashbourne that Seth Evans first heard Elizabeth preach, and after that they appear to have often met each other in various parts of the country at religious gatherings. They were married at St. Mary's church, Nottingham. Samuel lived longer than his brother. We are told that a great attachment existed between the two brothers, although they differed in their views on religious matters. 'When in partnership they were prosperous; and it is not too much to assume that the business capacity of the elder brother was superior to that of Seth, who was too yielding and too confiding to be intrusted with the affairs of this world.' The history tells us that a few days before his death Seth sent for the carpenter, and gave full directions respecting his coffin; and having made an exact calculation by measurement as to the most convenient means of moving it in and out, they were carefully noted down, and handed over to the undertaker for his guidance. Samuel Evans died in the eighty-second year of his age.

Elizabeth Evans, like Dinah Morris in the story, was a Methodist preacher, and lived and laboured among the Derbyshire hills more than half a century ago—near 'Arkwright's mills there at Cromford,' as we have it in 'Adam Bede.' She is as fit for a fine novel as is Livingstone for a grand epic. In reading the story, it is difficult to believe that a woman as good as Dinah ever lived; but Elizabeth Evans lived, and her life is as beautiful as that of Dinah. She preached in barns and outhouses, and on village greens before cottages. She was a pure-hearted woman, of poor parents. She lived at Wirk-

worth, and carried the Gospel to the peasantry of the surrounding villages. When she was 'called' to the work she was a beautiful young woman. She had a loving face and soft grey eyes. Her simplicity won the sympathy of hearers before she spoke, and disarmed the coarse incivility of country clowns. She stood up in the name of Methodism, but it did not mean the same thing then as it does now. It was not of that modern type which 'reads quarterly reviews and attends in chapels and pillared porticoes, but of a very old-fashioned kind. They believed in present miracles, in instantaneous conversions, in revelations by dreams and visions; they drew lots and sought for Divine guidance by opening the Bible at hazard, having a literal way of interpreting the Scriptures which is not at all sanctioned by approved commentators; and it is impossible for me to represent their diction as correct, or their instruction as liberal. Still—if I have read religious history aright—faith, hope, and charity have not always been found in a direct ratio with a sensibility to the three concords; and it is possible, thank heaven! to have very erroneous theories and very sublime feelings.' In her broad teaching of love, and charity, and truth, Elizabeth Evans was far beyond the limits of a sect. In her spiritual faith she reminds us now and then of Joan of Arc. Elizabeth toiled among 'Nature's unambitious underwood,' and lived a life that was a poem. Her fight was the fight of Christian in the 'Pilgrim's Progress.' She obeyed her conscience and worked for the good of others.

In the novel the descriptions of Dinah are descriptive also of Elizabeth. The heroine of fact and the heroine of fiction are

alike in walking, talking, dress, occupation, and the fortunes of life. Each wore a Quaker's bonnet, and lived and died in the Derbyshire hills. Dinah preached on Hayslope Green—Elizabeth preached on Roston Green.

A beautiful prayer, preserved as having been uttered by Elizabeth, is put into the mouth of Dinah. We all remember how Dinah stayed in prison with Hetty Sorrel, who had been condemned to death for the murder of her child, and how Hetty was released from death. Elizabeth Evans also stayed in prison with a young woman who had been condemned to death for the murder of her child. In the latter instance, however, the condemned woman was executed, and Elizabeth was with her to the last. And we all remember the two brothers, Adam Bede and Seth, carpenters, and that one became the husband of Dinah. Elizabeth Evans knew two such brothers, carpenters, and she became the wife of one of them.

The following sketch of the life of Elizabeth Evans is abridged from an account of her religious experiences, written by her own hand, with additions made by a Methodist preacher who accompanied her in many of her journeys on circuit. She did not keep a diary, and we must depend on the information of those who knew her. We may be sure they would not state anything untrue of her.

The autobiography begins:—

'For a long time I have felt it my duty to write a short account of my unprofitable life, but it is with great difficulty that I make a beginning. However, in the fear of the Lord, and, I trust, with an eye to His glory, I at last submit to take up my pen.

'I was born at Newbold, in Leicestershire, in the year of our Lord 1776. My dear mother died before I was twelve years old. She lived to God according to

the light she had, and always believed she must know her sins forgiven before her death. On the morning she died, a cousin of my father felt a strong conviction to visit my mother. He was in the Methodist connexion. He set out with all speed, and when he arrived at my father's house he found my mother as he thought dying. He spoke to her concerning her soul. She opened her eyes, and said, "The Lord Jesus Christ has sent you hither." She immediately found what she had been so long seeking, and almost instantly expired.

"My father professed himself a Churchman, and for many years expected to be saved by the works of the law. He used to instruct us to fear God and be honest. He could not bear the name of dishonesty or anything that was dishonourable, but he knew very little of Gospel faith or the plan of salvation, until it pleased the Lord, in mercy, to afflict him with a paralytic stroke, which confined him to his house for nearly two years. Meanwhile our dear friends visited him very much, and I have reason to believe that he became soundly converted to God. His last and most earnest request was to be buried in the Methodist burying-ground. Prior to this, meetings were held in his own house a year and a half. He was buried in the Griffy Dam Chapel-yard, in the Ashby Circuit.

"But I must, as I proposed, give some account of the dealings of God with my own soul. What I have suffered through the loss of my dear mother can only be explained in eternity; but the Lord's ways are in the whirlwind, and "what we know not now we shall know hereafter."

"Elizabeth's mother left four children—two boys and two girls. Elizabeth was the youngest daughter. Her father took a second wife, and the step-mother used the children with great cruelty. In consequence of ill-usage Elizabeth wandered from home, and after a long search she was found under a haystack by her father.

"I believe the Lord directed me to leave my father's house when I was little more than fourteen years old. I lived at Derby for about seven years, with a family that knew very little more about religion than myself. We had plenty of prayer-books and saying of prayers, but very little heart-felt religion. Previous to this time, when I was about seven years of age, the Lord blessed me with a little light concerning the nature of preaching. I saw that reading was not preaching. I could read a sermon, and yet I could not preach, and I thought that to read it over like a schoolboy was

not the way that God intended His gospel should be preached."

We hope this thought occurs to many of our modern clergymen: They have too much to do with matters of form, and they give but little evidence, as a rule, of enthusiasm in their clerical occupation. Many men become clergymen for positions in society. 'What right have such men to represent Christianity,' as Mary Garth says in 'Middlemarch,' 'as if it were an institution for getting up idiots genteelly?'

"I was powerfully impressed with a sense of the shortness of time, and the awful consequences of dying in sin, from the sermons preached in the Methodist chapel. The texts were, "In hell he lifted up his eyes," and "Here we have no continuing city, but seek one to come."

This must have been in the old preaching-place, near the All Saints' Church, Wirksworth. The King Street Chapel was not then built. There is an alley, called Amen Alley, on the opposite side of the church. It is not difficult to understand why it was so named. It is pointed out as the place where the old Methodists used to preach.

"The conviction never wore off to the day of my conversion to God. At this time I was very young. The Lord continued to strive with me, and to keep me from falling into many grievous sins. I used to say many prayers and strictly examine myself by the law of Moses every night. I always felt condemned from these words: "Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain." I saw that he who offendeth on one point is guilty of all. These words were most powerfully impressed on my mind: "Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things written in the book of the law to do them." What to do I knew not. I wept and prayed and longed to find the living way, though I was lost and confused, and dark and blind. Oh! how I longed for instruction! But I had no one to take me by the hand, or I believe at that time I should have been brought to a knowledge of the truth.

Oh! how I prayed the publican's prayer—"God be merciful to me a sinner." I had some quaint views of Christ coming into the world to save sinners, but how was I to be saved by Him I could not tell. I wandered in the dark, sinning and repenting for a long time.

'I removed to Nottingham, but had not the privilege of going to the meetings. I loved the Methodists, and always believed that if ever I was religious I should be one; but I had no acquaintance with any of them until I was more than twenty years of age. The tears I have shed on this account are known only to the Lord. I had now left service and was at liberty to serve God, but I reasoned for a few weeks with the enemy of my soul. I thought I never was happy, but I would be if possible. I sometimes went to the giddy dance, sometimes to card-playing, shameful to tell, after such repeated convictions for sin; but I could not find what I sought for, viz., happiness. I only grew more and more miserable until Easter Tuesday, which, I believe, was April 18th, 1797.

'The Rev. George Smith had just returned from Newfoundland. He preached in the Back Barn, and our people were turned out of their chapel through Mr. Kilham's division.'

This was Ockley Chapel. There was no other in the place at that time.

'The preacher took for his text, "Who art thou, great mountain?" There was a great work among the people. Many were crying out for mercy; and the Lord's people were very earnestly engaged in prayer, and often broke out in singing "Praise God, from whom all blessings flow." I saw no confusion in the matter. I concluded that sinners were repenting of their sins, as I ought to do. And the people of God were, so anxious for them to be saved; and these things caused them to rejoice. I longed for repentance more than I did for anything in my life, but I felt great hardness of heart. But while I was looking to Christ the mighty power of God fell upon me in an instant. I fell to the ground like one dead. I believe I lost my senses for a season; but when I recovered the dear friends were praying with me, and I was weeping most bitterly. It pleased the Lord in about two hours to speak peace to my soul. I arose from my knees, and praised God for that opportunity.'

(To be continued.)



RAPE OF THE GAMP.

CHAPTER XXI.

SOMETHING WRONG.

FIVE years have passed since the confession which Mr. Lane made to his friend on the first day of January, 185-. Shortly after that interesting incident Mr. Lane, under the auspices of Dr. Phelps, entered himself at the college in Oxford of which his friend was an ornament. There he resided for the space of about four years, strove the academical strife, and at length graduated there, although no such name as that of Lane had been registered on the college boards. In short, Mr. Lane had ceased to exist, and Bedford Lyte (*in propria persona*) had resumed the battle of life.

Of the sixth year one month is gone after those sixty months, and another moon is on the wane. The English clipper ship 'Adriatic,' of 3000 tons burden, is homeward-bound, with a strong northerly wind on her larboard quarter, with yards well braced, and every available square foot of canvas drawing its utmost. A magnified ideal racer, she rushes forward, showing speed and strength at every stride, as she reaches superbly from wave to wave, and tosses aside their watery crests, which glitter about her bows in never-ending rainbows.

One little circumstance is noticed by the solitary passenger who paces her clean poop deck. To this we shall presently have occasion to refer. He is not a seaman by profession, but having an artist's eye for the hull and rigging of a ship, and that mysterious sympathy for power which always exists in a strong man, he has wandered up and down the

numerous wharves of New York, and strayed among her forests of masts without experiencing a more hearty glow of admiration for any vessel than for the one whose deck he now patrols.

The intention of this passenger was to cross in the 'Aspasia,' a large mail steamboat which sailed a day or two before the 'Adriatic.' But it so happened that a mal-adroit little bird, an old and familiar companion, had escaped from the window of his hotel, and no consideration would induce him to abandon it. No sooner had the 'Aspasia' sailed than the truant (after apparently innumerable futile attempts) discovered its master's open window, and calmly returned to its allegiance. When we record the bird's name as 'Thomas,' it will not be necessary to state that the single passenger on board the 'Adriatic' was Bedford Lyte.

'We may be a week longer,' he murmured to himself, pacing the narrow deck, 'but I doubt if we shall. I should like to sail on a clean ship which beat a dirty steamer. No Cunard or Collins could pass us at this rate. Thirteen knots the mate gave by the last reckoning; but we have been making far more than that for the last thirty-six hours, according to our longitude. Let me see: thirteen knots are just fifteen statute miles. They could hardly beat that. I know the mail steamboat I went to Vera Cruz in could not.'

The passenger, though no sailor, was a fair mathematician and navigator, and Captain M'Leod,

of the 'Adriatic,' was anything but averse to compare his longitude with that of his passenger after their noontide observations.

Again the passenger struggled with some troublesome compunctions which suggested that steamers cross the Atlantic in shorter time than sailing vessels. 'She has waited five years for me, and won't throw me over for five days now,' he muttered, not quite with a tone of conviction, for a letter which seemed to burn in the breast pocket of his pilot coat implied that, whatever the perils of the deep might be, at least equal dangers beset his absence from the coasts of Albion. 'It is trying her too severely,' he continued, tramping up and down the windward side of the deck with such creaking, angry sea-boots that the second mate, vainly trying to sleep below, mentally consigned him to the tender mercies of David Jones — 'trying her too severely. I always was a brute. I have always hit my hardest where another man would touch most softly. I ought to have abandoned Tommy and taken the "Aspasia." It was madness to risk losing her for a tomtit.'

Finding no outlet for his angry impatience in any possible action, the strong man became rigidly statuesque, and perambulated the small space with fierce though silent energy, a moving petrification.

The wind freshened, still blowing from the north. It was the first mate's watch, and at six bells (3 P.M.) he came on the poop and gave orders for shortening sail.

'How do you like the blasts of Boreas, Mr. Lux?' he facetiously observed, and furled the top-gallant sails, the mainsail, and the jib, reefed the top-sails, and so made the ship 'snug,' as he called it, under reefed top-sails, a fore-

sail, and a foretop-mast stay-sail.

'But she'll have to be *snuggerer* yet afore long, or I'm a Dutchman,' cynically observed the third mate, who was steering the ship, being the only man on board who could do it singly.

Poor Bedford was so bewildered by the mate's dark classical allusions, and the relative merits of 'snug' and 'snuggerer,' that his attention was partially distracted from his proper woe and fixed upon the dangers of the deep.

The helmsman, who evidently had no sinecure, though he handled the huge wheel with a masterly touch, and was provided with a possible ally in the person of a sailor who shamled about to leeward, regarded the passenger with less contempt than the sons of Neptune generally bestow on 'land-lubbers.' He was Lyte's equal in size and strength, though decidedly not his superior in grace. Older than the captain, and probably a better seaman than any on board, he ranked little higher than a mere 'able seaman' in the ocean hierarchy. Perhaps as he stood there, not by any means neglecting his duty, but unavoidably looking at the man who passed and repassed him so often in his stern and restless patrol, he saw in his face and mien some indication of the struggle within him, and remembered in his own rude career some hour when his mind had been torn with a conflict of fear, doubt, or self-reproach to which the perils of his vocation were as mere daily chances. Whether from previous observation or some such present reflection, he now looked at the passenger with a keen interest. The latter returned the look, and gradually entertained a hearty respect for a man of such evident power and gallant bearing.

'How is it you are alone at the wheel in such a heavy sea?' he asked, observing the manifest labour of his position.

Solemnly expectorating behind the wheel, as if he had intended to deliver an oration, Mr. Crays jerked his head towards the amphibious person to leeward, and then, with something between a wink and a blink, devoted his powers exclusively to the compass and the helm. At this moment another sailor brought the binnacle lamp, already lighted, and placed it in its position; but Lyte noticed that Crays scarcely saw him, steering on solemnly, and considering the access of a lamp to the compass no more than we notice the rising or glimmering of a star at night.

Perhaps a little piqued at the man's reticence, Lyte stood and looked at the compass for a minute by the new light of the binnacle lamp, then at Mr. Crays, observing the effort which his control of the wheel cost him, and then said, 'Why is she so heavy in hand?'

The helmsman cocked his eye, shifted the plug of tobacco in his mouth, and looked knowing, but tacitly declined to converse.

Rather pleased now and amused at his persistence, Lyte was withdrawing by the companion ladder, when the amphibious one shuffled up to him, and with a scrape remarked, 'Muster Crays ee wunt spee-uk at t' wheel.' Then he shuffled away again, and the passenger retired, wondering whether the apologist came from Somerset, Dorset, or Devonshire. Thus even the current of events at sea will serve to distract a lover's reverie.

At eight bells, that is at 4 o'clock p.m., as the sun was sinking toward the horizon behind the good ship 'Adriatic' in a great blaze of crimson cloud, Mr. Lyte requested the steward's boy (a

coloured man about fifty years of age) to ask Mr. Crays to step into his cabin, which that mariner shortly did.

'You see, I am anxious, Mr. Crays,' said the passenger to his guest. The reader will understand that the third mate had no quarters among the gods in this part of the ship. Mr. Lyte continued: 'I asked you why she was so heavy in hand. I am no seaman, but—will you oblige me by taking a nip with me?' Whereupon Mr. Crays took his noggin of rum like a man, and Mr. Lyte took another, each blinking at the other in true nautical style. 'But, as I was saying, you were too busy to answer me. Now why does not the ship answer the helm more easily? I am terribly anxious to be at home.'

'You see, sir,' the third mate replied, 'she be a sight too deep in the water.'

So speaking, and wiping his mouth with the back of his brawny hand, the mariner bowed and withdrew.

'Another west-country man,' said Mr. Lyte to himself, having obtained little further information except a confirmation of his own opinion. But pursuing Mr. Crays to the main-deck, and finding him hesitating about a favourable moment for making the rush forward, he urged the question. 'Is there anything wrong with her?' he asked.

'Best ship out of London dock,' was the curt answer.

'Anything wrong with her cargo?' the passenger persisted.

'Good enough, for that matter,' replied Mr. Crays, 'but rather too much of it. Wheat in bulk, you know.' Then, as the water rushed out at the lee scuppers, he made his advance gallantly, and was soused from head to foot with the crest of an ill-disposed wave which

took that opportunity of dashing over the bulwarks.

'Poor old devil!' the passenger calmly observed, rather enjoying the immersion of his taciturn friend.

Mr. Lyte was the only passenger on board the 'Adriatic.' After completing his university course at Oxford, he had accepted an engagement to Mexico as correspondent of a London review, and was returning to England by way of New York. The delicacy which prevents a passenger in every instance from asking impertinent questions about the ship to which he has intrusted his life and his personalty, was in this case doubled by the fact that his passage was a gratuitous act of courtesy extended to him by a mercantile firm (agents of the London owners) whose acquaintance he had made during his brief stay in the Island City.

The circumstance which had attracted his notice before Mr. Crays' reluctant admission was the extraordinary depth of the ship in the water. Even in the smooth sea through which they had sped their way for the first few days, the water had continually gurgled in at the scuppers on one side, and out at the scuppers on the other side, washing across the main-deck in a manner more conducive to cleanliness than security. Latterly they had enjoyed a strong leading wind, with only a moderately heavy sea, and though the ship leaned over to leeward much less than Lyte's previous experience had led him to anticipate, yet now and again the summit of a wave curled over her bulwarks and flooded the decks from poop to fore-castle. The poop and fore-castle decks were so lofty that they remained comparatively dry. But even a landsman could see at a glance that a vessel encoun-

tering only moderate weather ought not to be half under water. And certain angry murmurs of the crew, to which it was impossible to remain deaf, had aggravated Lyte's suspicions of *something wrong*.

Already he had ventured on a faint and delicate hint to Captain M'Leod, who had received and hitherto uniformly treated him in the friendly spirit suggested by the very terms of his passage. The captain's testy answer to that hint had absolutely convinced him of impending danger. It was clear to an unprejudiced observer that the captain, being a fifth-part owner of ship and cargo, was reluctant to admit the overlading of his vessel, and yet was perceptibly annoyed at the avaricious policy which had overridden his judgment and sent him to sea in charge of an enterprise involving so much property and so many lives beyond his own.

With regard to the particular advantages or disadvantages of 'wheat in bulk' as a cargo, Mr. Lyte had hitherto obtained no experience, and the etiquette of his position rendered the asking of any questions a delicate matter. Mr. Crays' reticence, added to the captain's manifest testiness, made it clear that his duty to himself and all concerned now imposed silence upon him. Why 'wheat in bulk,' that is, in one undivided mass, in the hold of a sound, strong ship, should be more dangerous than wheat in sacks, he was at a loss to apprehend. Above the hold, or 'between-decks,' there was, as it seemed to him, a whole cargo of quite another character. This consisted entirely of American clocks, packed two dozen in a case, and also some heavier cases containing sewing-machines. This upper cargo occupied the region inhabited by passengers in an emigrant

ship, and had been stowed while Mr. Lyte was putting his effects on board and making his little arrangements for the voyage. The freight both on wheat and machinery was so high, and space so valuable, that no ship's stores, and no water except in the iron tank forward, had been placed below. The main-deck under the bulwarks was lined with double rows of casks of fresh water and barrels of provisions firmly lashed together, and, as it seemed to the passenger, impregnable to the assaults of wind or wave. The poop deck, however, and the fore-castle, though separated by the entire length of quarter and main decks, like two islands with an angry sea between, were free both of waves and artificial incumbrances. In a word, the good ship 'Adriatic,' from mast-head to keel, was one to cause the breast of a landsman to glow with admiration; and despite her rigidity and unseemly depth in the water, Mr. Lyte would have constantly and sincerely thanked the Messrs Dearborn for giving him this passage, had it not been for a tiresome letter which kindled agony in his breast.

After clear and bright weather, with a fair or leading wind from Sandy Hook, they had encountered fogs off the Newfoundland Banks, and were as yet hardly clear of these dubious shallows. At eight o'clock in the morning, however cold it might be, the passenger used to emerge from the cuddy door, and have a dozen buckets of sea-water pitched over him from the poop deck above. This, far from being irksome labour, was a bit of fun for the sailors while washing decks. With the help of an occasional chat with Captain M'Leod and the mate, and his observation and calculations at noon, and his perusal of some novels

purchased of Messrs. Harper before leaving New York, he managed to pass the short wintry days, and at night would lean over the taffrail, smoking his old wooden pipe, and fondling that quaint tomtit, which had become so familiar with his irregular hours as to roost indifferently by night or day. To his astonishment, one evening as he leaned over the lee rail, a hand heavy as his own was laid on his shoulder. He knew that M'Leod was pacing the deck to windward; but they had not been overfriendly since his inconsiderate question.

'Mr. Lyte,' said the captain generously, 'you thought me a bit crabbed with you, the day before yesterday, when you asked me a question. So I was. A man don't like to be catechised in that way.'

'I most sincerely apologize, captain. The truth is, I am such a land-lubber that I don't know how to behave as a gentleman on board ship.'

'Stow that, Mr. Lyte,' the captain replied. 'It strikes me you won't act otherwise than gentleman-like at sea or on land. I may not be exactly a gentleman myself, but I know one when I come across him, and —'

'Pray stow that, captain,' Lyte broke in; 'you surely cannot take me for a sham swell! I work for my living almost as hard as you do, and never hope to travel with a better gentleman than you are.'

'I know something about you from Messrs. Dearborn,' M'Leod rejoined; 'and my own wife's brother is a fellow of one of those colleges, though not half the man you are. I ought not to have cut up rough with you the other day. I can remember many a time asking my brother-in-law questions about his colleges and colleagues, and thinking him a very little-

mind man for seeming a bit impatient with me because I pushed him with questions on what was A B C to him, but Greek to me. The truth is, I'm rather put out with this overlading of the ship. It was done against my judgment, and ain't doing justice to me nor the ship.'

'I take what you say as a generous expression of good-will and confidence,' said Lyte; 'and if you have an opportunity of putting it to proof, I hope you'll find me worthy of it.'

'Well, Mr. Lyte, there's no saying what may happen,' the captain replied, somewhat moodily; and then repeated, 'there's no saying what may happen. Things don't look so ship-shape as I could wish. But I have a rare good ship's company. The three mates, boat-swain, carpenter, two boys, and four able seamen have stuck by me for these ten or twelve voyages.' Then, turning sharply on the passenger, and betraying a remarkable mixture of resolution and hesitation in his keen black eyes, M'Leod suddenly asked, 'Do you hear them growling at all?'

For a few moments Lyte hesitated, with downcast eyes, and probably those few moments were sufficient to convey an unspoken affirmative to the skipper's ready apprehension. But still he waited as if for an answer, to prove his man; and Lyte said, meeting his eyes calmly and firmly, 'I don't walk about your deck eavesdropping, Mr. M'Leod; but I don't mind saying that since I have seen how deep the ship is in the water, and how stubborn to her helm, I have regretted being your guest, for I have an object in reaching home.'

'So have I, Lyte,' said the honest seaman, again laying the heavy hand on his shoulder. 'I have a wife and a little girl on the coast of Sussex, and I should

be loth to leave them for good and all. Come down to my cabin and have a quiet glass with me.'

And down the two veterans, the sturdy sailor and no less sturdy landsman, went. Before they parted that night the latter understood something about 'wheat in bulk' and its disadvantages, or, rather, the disadvantages of those who carried it beneath their feet as cargo. Unlike wheat in sacks, which retained its position however the ship might lurch, 'wheat in bulk' was apt to shift to starboard or to larboard in some sudden lurch, when its own mass and weight would force it to maintain that new level, so hostile to the well-being of the vessel in which it lay, like an imperfectly digested repast in the abdomen of a suffering giant. But if the vessel should admit an insidious rivulet of water through one of its thousand seams, this horrible mass would swell and swell, still refusing to move, but distending its awful bulk until the sides of the doomed ship (forced open from within) gaped wider and wider to receive the all-devouring ocean. Mr. Lyte had also learned why American clocks should be placed between-decks instead of in the hold, and how it was that an officer who was part owner of the ship he commanded was unable to control the tonnage of her cargo. But beyond and even below these mysteries he reluctantly discovered that his honest captain was a secret devotee of Bacchus.

At midnight, when the watches changed, M'Leod went on deck for a few minutes to leave his orders with the officer of the watch, and Mr. Lyte ran the gauntlet of the scudding spray which swept the main-deck, making his way forward to smoke his last pipe on the fore-castle with the

man 'on the look-out.' A certain delicacy of feeling prevented him from even allowing further conversation on the subject of their common danger; and when the genuine British growler manifested itself in his companion, Mr. Lyte cut him short, saying, 'You ought to have protested before she sailed if you saw anything wrong. The best thing to be done now is for us all to pull together, and if anything *does* go wrong, to pull it right again.' 'Old Blowhard,' as this look-out man was denominated, stared at his companion in the dim moonlight with a puzzled wonder, until, as they approached the after limit of the forecastle in their short promenade, a heavy sea struck the ship on her weather quarter, shaking her from stem to stern, and a considerable portion of the crest lashed both their faces with its briny scourge, blinding them to everything except the necessity of self-preservation, which they immediately recognised by clutching hold of the nearest rope and crouching till the shock had subsided.

'And I should like to know what *you call that!*' retorted Mr. Blowhard, as if Lyte had previously been naming all the animals in Noah's ark.

'You have more experience of foul weather than I have. What do *you call it?*' asked the landsman.

'Foul weather and *foul play!* Them's what I call it. And d—d bad steerin' too, gettin' her into the trough of the sea like that.'

'I could have told that Mr. Crays was not at the wheel myself; but what *do you mean by "foul play"?* We're all on board the same ship.'

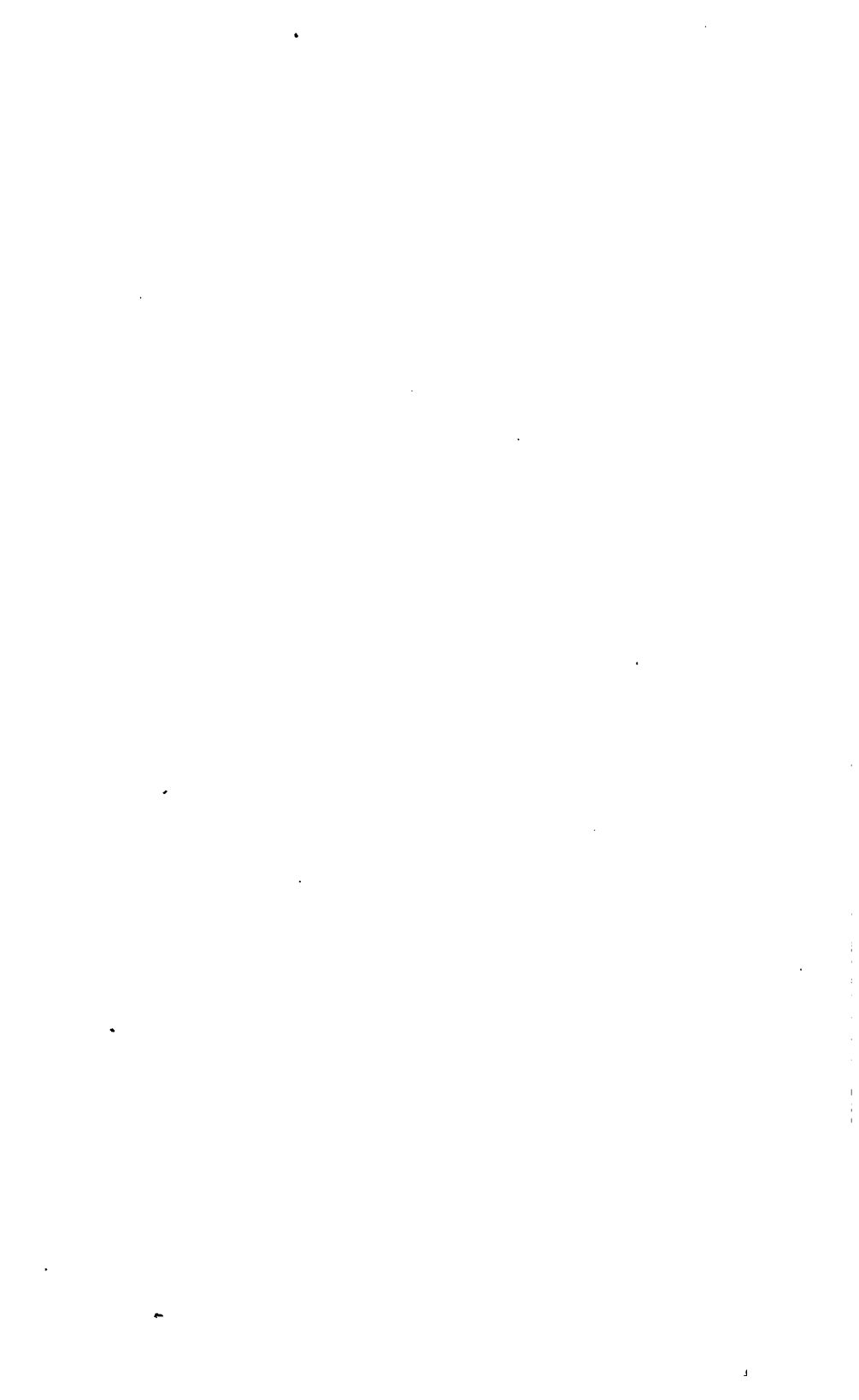
'But *the howners ain't,*' belowed Mr. Blowhard. 'They gammons a man into signing articles for the return voyage, and then

loads her down to the water's edge to come home in Febru-airy across the o-cean.'

'But the captain's on board,' the passenger mildly remonstrated.

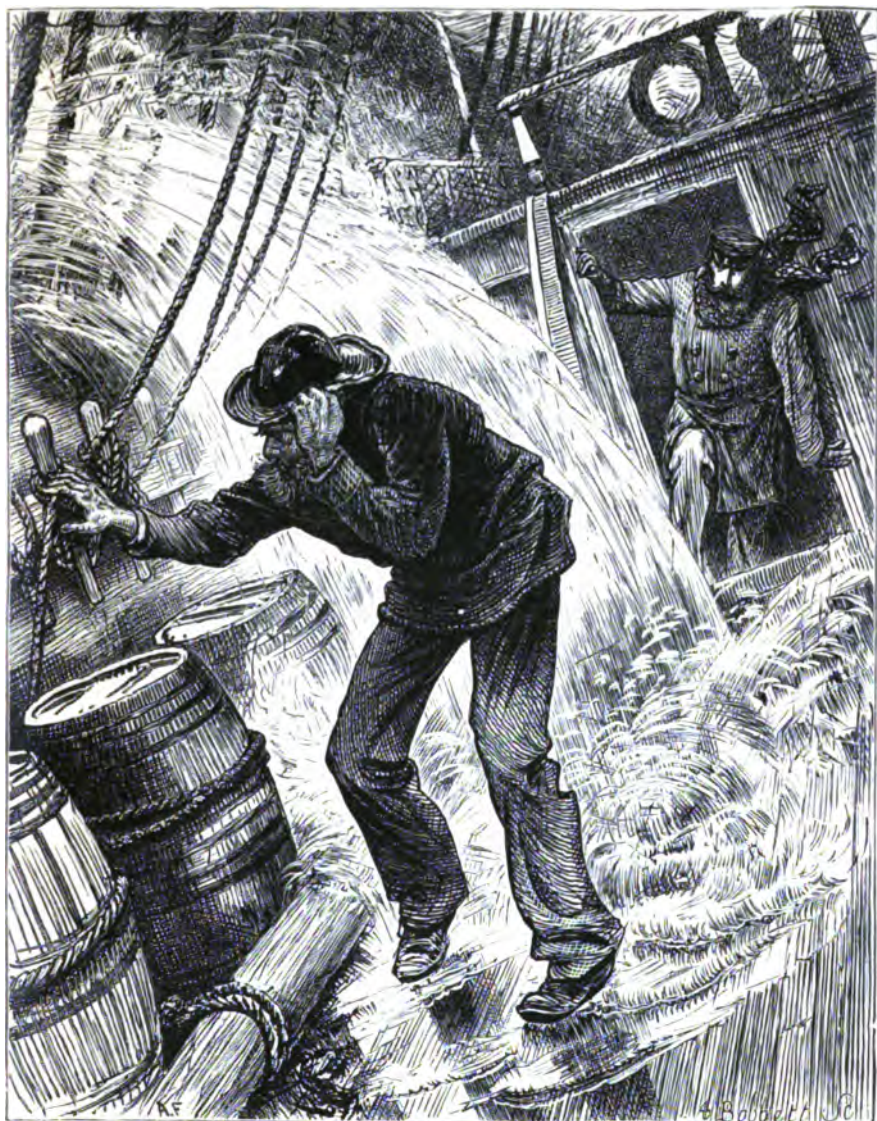
'I didn't say as he warn't,' savagely retorted the mariner. 'Though he is a fifth-part howner. The ship's insured. The cargo's insured. *Er's* insured. And what's more, he lushes within a hinch!' By which latter laconic form of words the seaman merely expressed his recognition of the dismal fact which Mr. Lyte had already been constrained to admit. So they parted in melancholy concord, and with mutual respect.

The 'Adriatic' being on the port or larboard tack, Mr. Lyte's cabin being on the larboard side of the ship, and his berth on the same side of his cabin, he was liable literally to tumble out of bed if the ship should lean overmuch to leeward, or particularly if she should lurch suddenly in that direction, especially as the steward in his hospitable zeal had accommodated the guest with two-thick mattresses, thus raising his recumbent body almost to a level with the summit of his bed-board. As yet, however, the ship, with a strong breeze, rising at times to half a gale, abeam, *i.e.*, at right angles to her course, had sped majestically on her way, deviating from the vertical and horizontal lines but little until this evening. The mercury, however, had been going steadily down for twelve hours or more; and though the pale moon was doing her best to illuminate the shroud of mist which hung over the sea, other indications of a coming storm were not wanting to an observant eye. 'Tuck yourself in tight; you'll have a bit of a roll before morning, if I'm not mistaken,' the captain had said



the 1990s, the number of people in the world who are under 15 years of age is expected to increase from 1.1 billion to 1.5 billion. The number of people aged 65 and over is expected to increase from 200 million to 400 million. The number of people aged 15 and over is expected to increase from 3.5 billion to 4.5 billion. The number of people aged 15 and over is expected to increase from 3.5 billion to 4.5 billion. The number of people aged 15 and over is expected to increase from 3.5 billion to 4.5 billion.

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RAPE OF THE GAMP.

'The third mate of the "Adriatic."'

to him when they parted. But Bedford Lyte was accustomed to inconvenience, and only thought about storms and tempests as the possible means of delaying his arrival at an English port. If only the gale were favourable, it might blow, so far as he cared, until their balance of life or death should hang poised in the crest of every billow, so long as they could only run before it, fly before it, outstrip the fastest mail steamer, and distance the very sea-birds in their flight. The only thing he dreaded was heaving-to and consequent delay.

The landsman had tucked himself tightly in, and was by the exercise of a strong effort gradually falling into the arms of Morpheus, when he suddenly became conscious of a very different fall. However it may have happened, he was involved, head foremost, like a netted lion, among the legs and lashings of the long cuddy table, and the door of his own cabin was playing a tattoo on the calves of his legs, which protruded across the space between the table and the bulk-head.

Crawling back again ignominiously to his retreat, and relighting his swinging lamp, Mr. Lyte took Frank Browne's last letter from the pocket of his pilot coat, and spent a restless hour in reading it and poring over its contents. Fool that he was not to have left America two days before by the '*Aspasia*,' that fast mail boat which always accomplished the voyage in twelve days, sometimes in ten!

The letter certainly contained much to distress him; and now that he came to look at it calmly, as he said to himself, but really less calmly than before, he was amazed at the frivolity which had beset him in New York, and had induced him to let the '*Aspasia*'

sail without him. Then his eye turned to the innocent cause of that delay with anger: perhaps the first time he had so looked upon it during all those years. And now the age and infirmity, the unwavering fidelity and constant love, of the little creature disarmed his wrath, as it stood roosting on one leg in its ridiculous manner, with head under its wing, like a ball of fluff, on the rail which supported the curtain of his berth.

'Poor little Tom!' he exclaimed, relenting. 'True friend and faithful companion! And never played me a trick before in all my wanderings. He is getting old and stupid; and the multitudes of the windows, all so exactly alike, in the hotel, confused him. No doubt he flew to a hundred wrong ones in succession, and found them shut, or saw strange faces within, and went back disconsolately to those bleak skeletons of trees, where he would have died if I had left him. Perhaps the climate of Mexico has affected his brain. Never mind, Tommy!

"You and I are old;
Old age hath yet his honour and his toil:
Death closes all."'

Remarkable and almost superstitious as his trust in the bird's preternatural instincts had hitherto been, it did not once occur to him now that any benefit should accrue to him from having missed the steam-ship and sailed in this half-doomed '*Adriatic*.' On the contrary, each time he read and re-read Frank's letter, he regretted the delay more and more, and cursed his own carelessness for letting the bird fly out of window in the midst of a crowded city, and from such a difficult window to distinguish among others.

But before looking over the distressed passenger's shoulder and

reading his letter, we must flit to other scenes and incidents of an earlier date.

CHAPTER XXII.

HIM! WHY, HIM!

FOR a long time past there had no longer been any unpleasantness between the Brownes of Pedlington and Bedford Lyte, as the possessor of that once-hated name. To tell how this happy reconciliation came about is our present office. That epileptic attack which broke down the resistance of the sturdy old lawyer on a certain Christmas Day some five years ago was followed by a terrible prostration, which at first affected, or seemed to affect, mind and body. The doctors (and we may be sure that plenty of these learned wights attended his temporary couch in Dover) were decidedly of opinion that this was likely to result *either* in a very alarming crisis, or in an ultimate tendency to yield to a very judicious and energetic treatment extending over a period of twelve or eighteen months. A tremendous gun of the largest calibre was telegraphed for. He came from the metropolis, and was, Frank declared, only distinguishable from the Pedlington and Dover authorities by the superior ticking of his pocket chronometer, which was furnished with a complete system of second hands, and fingers indicating fractions of seconds. After a profound and costly consultation, these magicians declined to state which of the above results would supervene, or how soon, or even whether either of these results, or anything else, would certainly ensue. But the doctor with the great watch and the fabulous fee hinted to Frank that he would be unwise

to neglect any little documentary arrangements (usual in such cases) while the patient retained some use of his mental faculties and right arm.

Thereupon all the Brownes were summoned, by telegraph and otherwise, and, as the custom of their family is when any member of it is about to die, assembled from the four corners of the county, from the hills of Surrey and the downs of Sussex. They came from Pedlington, from Brownleigh, from Farfield, from Tiddenden and Benterden and the remoter regions, until every bedroom in the old Castle Hotel at Dover was engaged for a Mr. Browne. The reader will understand that these good old-fashioned Tory families still patronise 'The Castle.' The new and meretricious 'Lord Warden Hotel' is for your travelling Americans, Russians, and Frenchmen, or mere English waifs and strays.

So about a baker's dozen of far-off cousins, including Uncle Robert, the head of the family, from Brownleigh, sat down lugubriously to greasy mutton-chops and damp potatoes at the common table in the frowsy old respectable coffee-room. I say lugubriously, although a grim hilarity usually prevails on these occasions, because a deadly feud existed and almost raged between every member of this affectionate group. Robert Browne, Esq., of Brownleigh, had especially infuriated each one of his connections and relatives, remote or near, by charging his estate in order to bestow upon that insidious warrior, Robert Browne, junior, a lieutenant and adjutant in her Majesty's —th Regiment of Infantry, an annuity of 200*l.* per annum. One Mr. Browne, a lawyer from Tiddenden, devoured all his smoky mutton without salt because the waiter had placed the salt-cellar

near an obnoxious young clergyman, the Rev. Timothy Browne, from Benterden. Not even about the weather

of them severally, made two or three feeble attempts to kindle a glimmer of intercourse on this pleasing topic. The



would they converse, although it happened to be execrable, and they were all damp; and the waiter, who was more or less acquainted with each one

ferocious dignity with which the youthful ecclesiastic said his 'grace before meat,' alone, and standing with folded palms, seeing that all the others fell to

unceremoniously (which they only did to annoy him, each being accustomed on other occasions to the same ceremony), was a study worthy of Hogarth.

After this dismal repast they each went in turn, glided into the dark chamber, stared at their dying relative, took up his unresisting hand, held it for a moment, then dropped it like a hot potato, and shuffled out of the room with an awkward and guilty aspect, as if each one had surreptitiously pocketed a silver spoon. It had been stipulated by Mrs. Browne beforehand that not a word should be spoken. He was not strong enough to bear it, she said; the fact being that he had quarrelled with every one of them except Uncle Robert, to whom alone he now gave his blessing, calling him a 'dear fellow.' The honest elder brother shed a tear as he dropped the hand, but none the less looked guilty and uneasy as he left the audience chamber. One exception to the general behaviour shone out in the case of the young clergyman. Long-coated, severe-cravatted, smug, prim, sleek, and carrying a book with a gilt cross upon it, he commenced a pious address to his dying uncle.

'Take him away,' gently observed the invalid, turning to the wall. 'Take him away. I never could bear the sight of him.'

And Mrs. Browne led him out, dimly conscious that he was alluding to pearls and a quadruped not famous for cleanliness or gratitude.

These were Walter Browne's funeral obsequies. Yet it is only fair to add that not one of these gentlemen expected a shilling from him. Amiable and affectionate each in his own household, it was the habit of the family to quarrel among its remoter members during life, and at the portal of death to

draw a veil mournfully over the preceding disagreement.

The good man had long ago made up his mind as to the disposition of his worldly affairs. As every wise man does, he made his last will and testament when sound in body and clear in brain. So strongly did he feel this duty that not even the severe calamity which had befallen Blanche would induce him to meddle with a will once made. No codicils for him, or Chancery suits for his family. Let Blanche live with her mother. Let Frank save a remnant of her fortune if possible. If not, let it be. By no means let Frank prosecute that scoundrel George Baily. His sin would find him out; and probably Blanche would forgive him in the end, if the man had ever loved her at all, or she him. These were some of Mr. Browne's funeral observations. But not all.

Calling the family whose acquaintance we have made in their native town round his bedside, he said: 'There is one reparation I would make before I leave a world of blunders, of lies, of trust and distrust alike misplaced. I wish every member of my own family now present to join in this solemn act of justice.'

Janet here crept to his side, knelt down, and seized his pale hand. Mrs. Browne, who was sitting there, made way for her, still bending over her child and her husband's hand.

'A noble young man,' Mr. Browne went on, 'has been calumniated to us by one whom I would speak of more severely if Blanche had not already suffered unjustly. Bedford Lyte, whose name I forbade in my house for twelve years, was utterly misrepresented to us, he and his conduct, by George Baily.'

How Janet squeezed and kissed that pale hand, and how Frank's and Albert's eyebrows went up

and up, for neither of the young men knew yet who Mr. Lane was.

Mr. Browne continued: 'I have, thank God, been able to sift the matter before I die. Your mother has in her desk Lady Balbry's written admission that her son, Sir Thomas, ruined that poor girl who visited us once, and whom Captain Lyte allowed us to call Eleanor Bailly—for shame to his memory!'

Now Albert's forehead threatened entirely to disappear, so high did his scanty eyebrows ascend to his glossy poll.

'She was,' resumed the sick man, 'a prenuptial child of poor Mrs. Bailly.'

If he had said *Poluphloisboio Thallas*, Janet would have had quite as distinct an apprehension of his meaning. All she knew or cared to know (and it was already only intuitively known) was that her lover was going to be justified.

'Bedford Lyte, poor fellow,' Mr. Browne resumed, 'did actually kill Sir Thomas Balbry for ruining that girl. But in the meantime—do you understand me, Frank?—I say, between the baronet's villainy to the girl, and his being killed by Bedford Lyte, the young man had been most basely tricked, cozened, befooled, into marrying the girl himself.'

The stout old Briton fell back exhausted here; and though the great revelation had not come, a kind of prescience, or at least premonition of it, was breaking upon them all. Although Janet was no more enlightened than the rest, her behaviour seemed to lead to a true solution of the mystery. Mrs. Browne was in the secret, and, though trembling for her husband, was anxious to see this act of justice accomplished. She presented him with a wine-glassful of strong beef-tea, and then another of port wine, after which he resumed:

'If that wretched girl is living, I say with sorrow she is still his lawful wife.'

Here Albert, taking advantage of another pause induced by his father's weakness, solemnly interposed: 'Frank and Robert'—for the Marauder was there, but so depressed and subdued in the presence of this sorrow that all his vivacity was gone—'Frank and Robert, what did I say? *Wrong there was. Why should we put it all into one scale?* And again, *I should be sorry to see any sister of mine as easy with gentlemen as Miss Bailly was.* Now you see. Who was right?' But neither of his former antagonists cared now to enter into the lists with Albert.

Mr. Browne continued: 'This brave and generous though foolish youth has grown up a brave, generous, and foolish man. Less than a month ago George Bailly, who when a mere lad had entered into this vile plot with his father, produced what they had secreted from the Captain, namely, a rescript of General Lyte's will, perfect and perfectly executed. He offered this to Bedford Lyte for a price. The young man chastised him in the presence of a servant, and destroyed this indisputable will, by which he knew himself his grandfather's heir, in the presence of three persons. By that act, Janet, my dear, this young man, in the flower of his youth, has lawfully given you of his own free-will that which Captain Lyte only gave you unlawfully on his death-bed. I objected to the first bequest. I always disliked Captain Lyte's will. This gift I cannot cavil at. The young man is very noble—very noble!'

Poor little Janet, still kneeling dejectedly at her father's bedside and holding his hand, in which from time to time she buried her

face, saw not whither all this mystery was tending. 'I always *knew* he must be a duck,' she sobbed—'a real duck! But, all the same, I shall give him back his fortune when I come of age!'

A faint smile again played over the dying man's face. He took his hand from hers, and laid it gently on the beautiful head nestling at his side, on which a furtive glimmer of sunshine played and reminded him of the glad old days of Pedlington.

Again speaking, with the light of that smile on his face, he said, 'You won't beat that man in generosity, my Janet; but come now quickly, for I am weary: *who do you think Mr. Lane is?*'

This question fell literally like a thunderbolt at the feet of all present. Doubtless mysterious combinations and coincidences had begun to direct their thoughts in the right groove. But not one present except his wife really knew or was prepared to divine the old man's secret. He looked round at them all with a more benignant and joyous smile than they remembered even in his day of health and strength. Only Albert had already suspected the truth, and then abandoned it in bewilderment.

'*Him!*' cried Janet at last, defiant of Lindley Murray, and starting up with blushing cheeks and flashing sapphire eyes. '*Him!* Why, *him*, of course!' Then she knelt down again, coaxing her father's poor pallid hand.

Mrs. Browne patted her comely, shapely head, decked with its masses of loose golden hair.

'*Oh, the wicked Tulip!*' Nelly softly exclaimed.

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE LAST FEATHER.

THERE was much sweetness at that time to temper the bitter of Janet's trial; yet when we recollect that, though a just and honest man, utterly above fraud or chicanery, and steering his stubborn way as well as he knew how through the shoals of life, Mr. Browne had systematically indulged his daughters; and, while sneering at any enthusiastic occupation for girls, had encouraged them both with purse and countenance in mere pleasure-seeking of an innocent kind, it would be in the last degree unjust to expect on her part any matured powers of endurance or self-control. Puzzled now between Mr. Lane and Bedford Lyte, and having a profound respect for the man whom she knew as Mr. Lane, almost independently of her love for him, and quite independently of what she had recently learned of Bedford Lyte, she took refuge from her difficulty in calling her lover '*Sir*.' This was all arranged, of course, in her secret council-chamber, and there adding together her reasons to respect the two men, to love the former (Mr. Lane), and to pity the latter (Bedford Lyte), she achieved a splendid feminine ideal, and called it '*Sir*.' There was something grotesquely interesting about this innocent and lovely girl. Those of our readers who follow up this brief chronicle to its close will be perhaps more interested in her and in her fate at its end than during its earlier stages, and will wish to know somewhat of her married life. But before long we shall find her, yielding to her own ungovernable impulses, in imminent risk of never reaching the connubial epoch.

It was evident enough that 'Sir' had never loved any one but her. Having, as her most truthful father said, been tricked into marrying that wretched Eleanor, he could not now get rid of her. Janet well understood that a man of delicate feeling would not drag a woman from the seclusion of a cloister to undergo the exposure of a trial for divorce. 'Well,' she said to herself, 'I can wait. I love him. I adore him, my noble, my generous, brave Sir. And he loves me. He was dazzled by my beauty! Oh, how splendid! Who else *could* have said anything so exquisite? I could *die* when I think of it. Oh! oh!' These ecstasies, which would have been pretty acting if vented in public, were merely Janet's secret reveries.

But before long all the world was indignant with Walter Browne, Esquire, solicitor, of Pedlington; especially those gentlemen who had secured the reversions of the clerkships to the Justices of the Peace, to the Peddle Navigation Company, to the Turnpike Trust, to the County Lunatic Asylum, to the Peddlebourne Union, and to the Kent Conservative Superior Hop Cultivation Association, all of which Mr. Browne held, and continued to hold, though Death had knocked at his door with bony and importunate knuckles, and though (what was perhaps quite as important) Frank Browne had calmly stated that all the clerkships might go to—some obscure region—for him.

But his relations were even more infuriated, his far-off cousins, and remote step-uncles and nephews, who had eaten the dolorous mutton at Dover, 'the funeral-baked meats' of anticipation. After collecting round him all the paraphernalia of death, robing himself, as it were, in the pomp and panoply of coming dis-

solution, and actually giving a death-bed audience to his kith and kin, this old violator of conservative traditions had deliberately convalesced, and had gone back to his clerkships and emoluments at Pedlington just as if nothing had happened. Frank went so far as to inform Mr. Lyte, of Balliol College, Oxford, that a certain great London physician's watch had left off ticking, and was expected never to tick again, when its proprietor became aware of this recovery. Had Mr. Browne only remained deaf and dumb or blind (let us say), or imbecile and incapable, or paralytic in one side and a portion of the other, or given some such hostage to death and the doctors, his partial recovery would have been endurable. But for a man who had undertaken to give up the ghost to retain it in this surreptitious manner was contrary to the good old usages of conservative society. Thus a Tory, however staunch, may outlive his own reputation. Mr. Walter Browne, hitherto unimpeachable, was now a renegade from the Tory ranks of respectable death in the command of a Tory doctor. His cousin, the surgeon at Farfield, called him 'an old body-snatcher.' The severe ecclesiastic dubbed him 'a Lazarus.' And even his own most gentle and loving wife fancied that he had outwitted and made fools of a large and most respectable body of people. But Frank, to his infinite credit, laughed all this nonsense to scorn, made fun individually and collectively of the whole tribe, and showed that some petty motive, which he ruthlessly exposed and derided, was at the bottom of this peevishness to which every one except honest Uncle Robert and their own little household had become a victim.

Mr. Browne's recovery might have achieved one benefit to his kith and kin. If they could only have combined and consorted for any purpose under the sun, they would now have done so, in the glow of their indignation, to abolish for ever the foolish custom of clustering like vultures about a dying relative, taking up a sick man's hand and dropping it as if it were a hot potato, and then sneaking out of his presence like petty larcenists.

Whatever his remoter kindred might do or leave undone, all the family at Pedlington returned to their filial allegiance, and placed Bedford Lyte (the man whom they already loved, now in possession of a name which they had learned to dread) upon a pinnacle of love and esteem. The sad feature in the case was that now, for these five years, he never would come near them. Dr. Phelps, now one of Mr. Browne's favourites, had often visited him at Oxford, and had travelled with him in Europe. Captain Fuller, who had sensibly transferred his affections to Nelly, frequently visited Lyte at Oxford, and received him at Watermead. Frank visited him twice, at long intervals. Hubert twice at shorter intervals; but to Pedlington he never came. 'He must have heard of the disease among the tulip bulbs in Kent,' said Nelly. Suns set; moons waned. The former rose, the latter were restored again, as the poet observes. Then it all happened over again and again. At last the course of nature waxed exceedingly monotonous, and the social order flat, stale, and unprofitable to Janet. She had no work to do, except those everlasting gloves and shirt buttons of Frank's, and certain pretty little needle tricks that will not occupy the heart or mind. She could not

enjoy from time to time the innocent excitement of wondering, before a ball or picnic, about some possible lover, and regulating her own behaviour (real or imaginary) toward the mysterious *inconnu*. Nor could she, as an honest girl, deliberately ogle, entrap, grab, strangle and scrunch the bones of any unsuspecting lover, as a spider uses a fly, knowing all the time that she could award him no other treatment when caught. Novels were utterly vapid to her perceptions unless they portrayed a character like her 'Sir'; if they did so, it drove her mad to read them. And how could she live without love, now that love had so absorbed and swallowed up her former life that she could not remember it, and wondered how she had dragged on her existence from day to day and week to week without it? Yet, not being any longer able to live without this elixir of life, how was the supply of it to be maintained within her? Would love continue to subsist on one little recollection, like the widow on her cruse of oil? Alas! alas! The cruet was already failing—had failed almost, and was well-nigh empty; so she thought. Her heart was heavy and weary within her, and sick with hope deferred, and sere with vain regrets.

To see Nelly loving and loved, as she did daily now; really and steadfastly loved by a true and loyal man (though she had rejected him herself), was maddening. Now that Nelly had occupied that forlorn fortress, his heart, she was almost tempted to flirt with Captain Fuller from sheer mischief and a splenetic desire to inflict a wrong upon that obdurate 'Sir' who left her to suffer beyond her power of endurance, to wait beyond her patience, to exhaust her fortitude, to sin, if she

would, without a word of comfort, support, or counsel from his lips. And all for what? Some sullen ghost of barren honour, some verbal, perhaps legal, bond to one whom he never had and never could love. Oh, how she would like to get at that cruel woman, that Eleanor, and stab her to the heart!—drive the dagger home, as she had read in some old legend, till the haft struck against her ribs.

It is not too much to say that at times she was carried away by a passionate desire to commit this crime, and thought herself in serious danger of yielding to the temptation and making that homicidal expedition to the quaint old Belgian city. But with regard to Bedford Lyte, she so longed and grew sick of vainly longing for him and his love, that after two years of it she would assuredly have thrown patience to the winds, abandoned all conventional restraints, and gone to him, had she not too clearly foreseen how he would act. She would have gone to him and said, 'Here I am, Sir. Here is your poor little Janet, to whom you gave a fortune, but whose heart you took away. Only let me stay and be near you always. Do not send me back, Sir.'

Not only did she desire to do this foolish thing, but would actually have done it had she not seen, as in a vision, his calm relentless frown, more in sorrow than in anger, but still immovable even by her tears and cajoleries—had she not heard, as in a trance, his voice pronouncing her sentence of banishment, which would then have been irreversible. He would have taken her back, as cold and hard as a statue himself, and given her up to humiliation and despair. Yes, he would assuredly give her up and banish her for ever on account of that ghost of barren

honour, that legal fiction, which bound him to a woman who was *not* his wife. 'For I am his true wife,' she would aver to her own heart, 'in virtue of this love that I bear to him.' From this she would draw some comfort. 'And does he not love me?' she would ask herself. 'Am I not his own little girl, to whom he gave this splendid fortune, which I thought so little of before, so much now? He would not give it to any one else, only to me. Twelve thousand five hundred pounds! So much! why, the interest alone is four hundred and six pounds five shillings a year, and I have already saved five hundred pounds to give Nelly when she is married. He gave it to me. He loves me. I heard him say so. I heard. I was listening at the door.' Then she repeated to herself those delicious words which she had overheard at the door of Frank's bedroom. That was her one luxury, poor little innocent. She had not even the green cotton umbrella now. But she had one little gift, only one. How she did treasure it! in what a system of bags it dwelt! First leather (*chamois*), then one of silk, then holland, double and wadded between, then velvet, embroidered and fringed and beaded, with the monogram S. J. worked upon it.

Frank had been spending a few days at Oxford with his friend. The days, few in number, were past, but not a word of Janet had been spoken, except in the first general inquiry about the health of 'the young ladies.' Since then every other member of the Browne family had, at one time or another, come on the *tapis* and been talked of, but Frank could see that Janet was a sealed book in the memory of Lyte. Just as they had seated themselves in the carriage which had been ordered to take the

Adonis with his morocco bags and valises, his canes and his travelling wrappers, to the station, Frank said in his usual indifferent drawl, 'Oh, ah! by-the-way, Lyte, I forgot that *fleur d'Italie*. Could you drive me past a perfumer's? Janet wants a bottle of that new scent, and all the places in London will be closed when I pass through to-night.'

At the words 'Janet wants,' something inside Bedford's waistcoat gave such a bound that a button nearly flew off. Before Frank had finished his argument Mr. Lyte's head and shoulders were out of the window. In another minute the carriage stopped, and he sprang out saying, 'Sit still and take care of the traps. I won't be two minutes.' In about that time they were again on the move.

'Oh, yes. Thank you very much. How much was it?' Frank inquires.

'Never you mind,' said Lyte abruptly. 'Give it her from me. Any one can give a lady a bottle of scent.'

'But it isn't every one who can, and I never met another man who would, give a girl a nice fortune; though I have encountered two or three who would *take* one if they could get it, and put up with the girl to boot.'

This was the first intimation which Lyte had received that the Brownes knew of his generosity in destroying his grandfather's will, although he had been informed of the change of feeling which Mr. Browne had expressed toward the once-hated Bedford Lyte when the lawyer was supposed to be dying. He had feared that any such knowledge would distress them, and hoped it would never reach their ears. But Frank went on ruthlessly: 'We all know of your noble-hearted generosity,

my good fellow, and repent the cruel injustice we had formerly done you. But you will do me the justice to remember how heartily I wished Mr. Lane to marry Janet, and so recover the fortune I wanted to keep from Bedford Lyte.'

'I shall not forget it in a hurry.'

'And I need hardly tell you how I wish it could be so still. I cannot give up hope. Surely you could get a divorce. Janet is the same, only more beautiful than ever. The men rave about her. But I don't want this feeling to consume her, Lyte. I care more for Janet than the money, though you may think me mercenary.'

The murder was out now at the last moment.

'May you not be mistaken about her feeling?' asked Lyte, as the carriage was checked at the door of the station.

'No. She tells me a good deal, and I see more.'

When Frank had consigned everything except a favourite dressing-case to a porter, and taken his ticket, Lyte said eagerly, 'It must be starved out, Frank. She is young, and will yet form a strong, healthy regard for another man. It is impossible for me to drag *that poor creature* from the privacy of her convent, and parade her old shame and misery before the world. And if that were done, I could not marry. Only death can sever that bond. Give Janet that bottle of scent from yourself, and you can pay me when we meet again. The train is off now. Good-bye.'

Frank was borne away from his benefactor with a sore heart and a measure of anger in it. His regard for Lyte was sincere, but he growled at him as a quixotic pedant, not being able to rise to the moral level which was the other

man's natural atmosphere. That little bottle, however, was Janet's treasure. She had wheedled the secret out of Frank. 'I love her, I love her,' the dumb bottle seemed to say whenever she looked at it.

* * * * *

The four years of Lyte's Oxford career passed quickly enough with him, though not without constant effort, as time will pass to a man with manifold and absorbing interests. It must be a very different thing to be a young lady in a torpid country town. First and foremost stood his intellectual struggle, in which he was even more strenuously engaged than those who saw his exterior calm imagined to be the case. This could not and did not cure him of love, but was so exacting to his powers and satisfying to that love of conflict and excitement which rules within a strong man as to preclude all danger of love-sickness. Not that the possibility of love-sickness was absolutely removed from Lyte's path, as he would have discovered in double-quick time had he yielded to intellectual languor. Often in those sad, silent, solitary night watches, when the mind of a man strays from its nearer interests and goes back pitifully to those dearer ones which are as lost, the memory of Janet Browne, endued with that irresistible fascination which had mastered him in former days, came and stood before him in all its old power of beauty and sweetness. Sooth to say, at those times the strong man was nearly overcome. The vision would appear before him as the fair girl herself had done on a certain night in the little tea-room during her mother's evening party. Silently it always seemed to stand and appeal to him by its aspect. Yet did he never forget that her voice in speaking was low and sweet, like

the breath of summer among dewy leaves. But with all his might he would put these visions away from him, and force his mind into its wonted groove, and urge it along with the power of his trained will, until these images were chased away from the retina of his imagination and the danger past. How different it was perforce with her!

Then, in addition to his studies, and in wholesome relief of the strain upon his mental faculties, Bedford Lyte had his boating, swimming, and running to occupy much time and attention, to call into action and expend much superfluous energy, and afford a useful vent for the enthusiasm of his disposition. Being a large and powerful man as well as a skilful oarsman, he rowed for the first year as No. 4 in his college eight-oared boat, which gained several places on the river during the college races. The next year he was picked out of his own boat on account of his splendid style and great strength to row No. 4 in the second university boat, which was preparing to supplement any gaps in the first boat, then training for the great race with Cambridge. At first he declined this honour, but, being pressed, acceded to the wishes of his friends merely to assist in perfecting the second or subsidiary boat. At the same time he positively asserted that in no case would he join the racing crew. After about four weeks of training, however, he found his mind rather invigorated than exhausted by the severe physical exercise and the enforced regular hours, and having measured out his book-work, and found that he could do as much as before, ceded that point. The No. 4 originally chosen for the first boat, a man his equal in style and strength, but younger and less

vigorous in constitution, began to spit blood, as is often the case under a too-severe trial of the powers of endurance. So Bedford Lyte went into the racing crew, and rowed in two successive years in the great university race on the Thames.

Being thus continually in good bodily condition, his college, who were proud of their champion, urged him to enter for the university athletic sports, in which he more than once gained distinction for himself and them. The training necessary for these exploits, which occasionally proves too severe for a minor, whose vital energy may not be equal to his muscular strength, was really of permanent service to Lyte both intellectually and physically. It obliged him to abandon that pernicious habit of working at night into which he had fallen, and habituated him to a simple, regular dietetic system, besides endowing him with a hearty and unfailing appetite. All these things are inimical to any excesses of a fertile imagination.

But we should hardly have entered so fully into these retrospective details were it not that these distinctions, even more perhaps than the academical honours gained by her hero, brought the name of Bedford Lyte in all its glory so continually before Janet as to keep her in a kind of intermittent fever of enthusiasm and suspense. For weeks before a university boat-race she would wear nothing but Oxford blue. Before the great event came off she could have laid violent hands on any person who sported the paler (Cambridge) hue. After each of her hero's victories she would subside into a week's delicious security, and take to her bosom any acquaintance who had been interested in the

losing boat. She made Frank subscribe to the Oxford 'Chronicle,' from which paper and from the 'Times' she would cut out every paragraph which chronicled the name and achievements of her lover. She literally despised all other men in her mental comparison of them with him, and believed him to be the most profound scholar and peerless Paladin who ever dazzled a benighted world. Moreover—and this was the most delicious assurance of all—she knew that if he was, in his romantic sense of honour, depriving her even of his friendship and fraternal regard, it was not because any other girl had fascinated, or could fascinate, him. Of this she was absolutely certain. He only kept away because her spell upon him was too potent, because he was afraid of loving her 'not wisely, but too well.'

Before every long vacation and every Christmas vacation went forth a kind and friendly invitation from the Brownes of Pedlington to the Oxford student. Yet he never came. Frank went to him twice during those four years, Hubert went to him twice, and each brought back little crumbs of comfort for Janet. She had formed quite an attachment for Dr. Phelps too, and that genius contrived to impart some morsels of gratification and relief to her weary spirit.

Mr. Browne, who had almost entirely recovered his own vigour, entertained an increasing respect for the young man whom he had once abhorred, thinking it both wise and generous of him to persist in refusing the invitations which he still thought proper to have sent twice each year without fail. To one Lyte would write and say he was in rigid training for some Corinthian games, and would be executed by lynch-law if he dared to move from Oxford; to another

that only the day before its receipt he had engaged to go on the Continent with a friend, or on a walking tour in Wales, or somewhere, and with some purpose incompatible with a visit to Kent.

All this time, however, Eleanor Baily, as they still called her in their secret conclave, was alive, and it was therefore right and honourable on the part of her unfortunate husband to keep away from another young lady whose charms had already proved too much for him. But by a strange and, as it at first seemed to Janet, by a providential coincidence, in the very week after Bedford's final examination at Oxford, while he and all his friends were waiting in breathless suspense for the *lists* to be issued and his academical fate made known, news of Eleanor Baily's death in the nunnery in Belgium came to Pedlington. Mr. Browne would have concealed it a while, but Miss Lyte wrote to Janet and told her with a crow of delight. Then the class lists appeared, and Bedford Lyte was *facile princeps*, the Senior Classic of his year, thus verifying Martin's ancient avowal that 'Mr. Lane' was 'no end of a scholar.' That young gentleman, who had faith-

fully adhered to his old master, and made fair progress in the face of his difficulties, was enrolled among the third class in classical honours.

Janet was in a flutter of expectation. Would *he* come at last? Not Martin. She knew too well that Martin would come. He still worshipped the boards on which she capered with 'the light fantastic toe;' for Janet had continued to appear at balls, though with a somewhat forlorn and Lenten aspect. Martin came, flushed with his virgin honours, to lay them at her feet, but 'Sir' neither came nor wrote. 'They'll give him a fellowship now, you know. They want to have him for classical lecturer,' said Martin. Janet stamped, and blushed, and frowned. She wouldn't take the heir of Plumstead Manor, with his third class. She wanted the Senior Classic, and the biggest man in the university boat. But 'those horrid old trumps' *did* make Mr. Lyte a fellow, and offered him the lectureship, which he declined, and went incontinently off to Mexico as a war correspondent. This was the climax of Janet's woe, the last feather which broke the camel's back.

(To be continued.)



OTTER-HUNTING ON THE COQUET.

BY THE AUTHOR OF 'MOUNTAIN, MEADOW, AND MERE.'

THE otter is now the only really wild beast of the chase in Great Britain. The fox is preserved and taken as much care of as any domestic animal until his turn comes to be hunted. The otter, on the contrary, has every man's hand against him. Wherever his existence is suspected he is watched for and shot or trapped. If he were not nocturnal in his habits, he would long ago have been exterminated. As it is, he is rarely seen unless he is hunted or watched for with a view to his destruction. The angler who reaches the river-side early in the morning—soon after dawn it must be—sometimes catches a glimpse of him, or more frequently only hears his loud plunge into the water as he approaches.

The otter is the very shyest of animals, and it is only natural that the great increase in the number of anglers who visit all our rivers should have driven him farther and farther north—to the wildest and most unapproachable streams. We cannot help regretting that so interesting a denizen should become so scarce. Like the golden eagle, it is an ornament to our *fauna* that those of us who are naturalists and sportsmen can ill afford to lose.

In appearance the otter is like a magnified polecat, but dark brown in colour, and with a bulldog-like head. Like the polecat, its body is long and flexible, and is very strong and muscular. Its bite is a very formidable one, and often makes sad havoc among the hounds. It swims swiftly, if under the water, coming to the surface every now and then to breathe, or 'vent,' as it is technically called. It

makes its habitation in holes in the river-bank, the entrances to which are usually under water and between the roots of a tree—a very stronghold of a place, from which it is often impossible to dislodge it.

The rocky trout-streams of the west and north are the places where the otter is usually found, and where it is hunted. There are but few packs of otter-hounds in England, and the sport can never be a general one. The hounds employed are a variety of the old southern hound, about the size of a fox-hound, but heavier in build, and long-haired and shaggy. They are not very swift, but are of necessity good swimmers. They are very savage, and frequently quarrel—even sometimes killing each other in their fury. Terriers, too, are necessary to make the otter bolt from his 'hover' or 'holt.'

Of course otter-hunting is followed in the summer-time, and on foot; and if one really works with the hounds, it is often the hardest of hard work, but healthy and invigorating.

For many years I had longed to make one in an otter-hunt, and when at last the opportunity came, I gladly seized it. It was in Northumberland, and the hounds—a private pack—were to meet at Felton, on the far-famed Coquet. The meet was fixed for four o'clock one Monday morning, an hour which seems unearthly to dwellers in towns. It was necessary, however, to meet thus early, as the day dawned about two o'clock, and the scent of the otter would rapidly vanish under the rays of the sun.

Sunday evening saw a number

of us proceeding by train to Acklington Station. Upon arriving there, we found it was an hour's walk to Felton. The only conveyance there was would hold but few of us; so, consigning our luggage to the care of the driver, those of us who did not secure a seat dived into a wood and took a very pretty path which would lead us by a short cut to Felton. As we trudged along, under the guidance of one of our number, who declared he knew the way, and who, by-the-way, succeeded in getting us very nicely lost, we discussed our chance of finding accommodation at the village inn. It was clear that some of us would have to be contented with sofas and chairs for the night.

At nine o'clock we reached the inn. After some discussion, each man had his sleeping quarters assigned to him, and then we turned our attention to ordering something to eat. Ham and eggs and tea were soon forthcoming. Two huge dishes piled up with ham and new-laid eggs fairly frightened even nine hungry men. I never saw such a quantity cooked before. It seemed an almost hopeless task to begin to demolish it, and ere half had gone the way of all (eatable) flesh we had to give in.

At eleven o'clock somebody suggested that we had better go to bed early, as we had to be up early; so, after a nightcap of whisky, we retired, or rather endeavoured to do so; for those who had to sleep on sofas, &c., had great difficulty in turning the men out of their rooms, there being a general inclination to sit up and talk. One man had been down to the river to see if he could discover the 'seal' or track of an otter. He had done so, and had brought back indisputable evidence of an otter's presence in his purse. At length the house was

quiet, and we tried to sleep. I was fortunate in sharing a bedroom with an acquaintance. The bed was not large enough for two, so I had the feather-bed on the floor with a portion of the bed-clothes, and my companion slept on the mattress.

I had not been many minutes in bed ere I discovered that it was quite damp; I mentioned this, and my companion replied, 'Well, my bed is as hard as a third-class carriage, so I don't think we are either of us in for a very comfortable night.'

Between the novelty of the position, the fear of taking harm from the damp, and the knowledge that I had to be up so early, I did not sleep a wink. I tossed and turned about in the most uncomfortable fashion, and anathematised otter-hunting and all belonging to it. To add to my discomfort, it apparently came on to rain.

The drops fell so fast, as I thought, and so unceasingly, that I gave all hope of sport on the morrow. At last I got up and put my head out of the window, and was relieved to find that I had only heard the sound of the wind rustling the foliage of some trees that grew close to our bedroom window. It was beautifully fine. The moonlight was just paling in the coming dawn, and the grey river was just visible in the reach above the bridge.

'What time is it?' asked a discontented voice from the bed.

'Hallo! I thought you were asleep; I have been envying you. It is two o'clock.'

'Asleep! I haven't slept a wink, and I'll be shot if I'll ever come otter-hunting again.'

In half an hour's time we could hear that the others were astir; so we got up and dressed. At three o'clock we had breakfast. We were certainly a picturesque

group. The master was dressed in a scarlet jacket and cap, and had his brass horn slung across his breast. The rest of us were attired in rough-and-ready costumes. Knickerbockers with stout boots seemed to be the most serviceable. Presently we heard the blast of a horn echoing shrilly in the morning air, and then a musical yelp.

'The hounds!' we cried, and rushed to the window to catch a glimpse of the long-eared beauties.

'Now, gentlemen, if you have finished your breakfasts, we will be up and away. The early hound catches the otter.'

So off we trooped. When we got outside, we saw that Felton is indeed a lovely spot. The Coquet is here the very beau ideal of a trout stream. Clear and sparkling like champagne, it froths and flows over and between rocks and stones and down long stretches of dark pebbles and golden gravel. Swirling around stones from which the long moss trails in the eddy, bubbling and seething under tree-roots and projecting crags, widening out into clear pools by grey stone bridges, and darkening into long deeps, there is every variety of feeding and playing ground for the red-spotted trout. But we must leave the fish alone for to-day, tempting as they are; so we proceeded up the river with the hounds. Most of us struck a point far in advance of where the master first set the hounds to work, and we waited in the white morning stillness for them to come up. Soon we heard the crack of the whips, and presently saw a terrier splashing about from stone to stone. Then Towler, a good hound, but too eager, came racing along, just sniffing here and there, but in far too much of a hurry to be hunting well. 'Go back, Towler, go back, sir!' was the cry. Towler went back, and when all the

hounds came up we accompanied them up the river.

The dogs hunted well up both sides of the river, smelling and examining every rock and mud-bank, and scanning curiously every hole and tree-root. We—the hunters—did not number more than a dozen. The pack consisted of about seven couples. It was amusing to watch the busy air with which the terriers darted about. They evidently thought they were quite as important as the larger dogs.

We disturbed the heron at its morning meal, the trout scurried over the shallows in rare affright, and the waterhens scuttled out of their cover at the water's edge in a state of indignant protest at our untimely invasion. The keen morning air and the excitement of the chase effectually dispelled the weariness the uncomfortable night had caused.

Presently Towler, who, as usual, had forged ahead, gave tongue loudly. Far before us we saw him on a rock in the middle of the river, with elevated head, belling out his musical note as if mad with joy, and utterly unable to restrain himself at having discovered the scent or 'drag' of an otter. The other hounds raced up to him and gave tongue also, and set off up stream at a good pace, the field following, confident that sport was afoot.

I suddenly found myself alone on what was evidently the wrong side of the river, and my further progress was barred by an unfriendly combination of rocks and trees. I dashed into the river and made for the opposite bank. Alas! wet stones are slippery, and holes are ready to entrap the unwary; so head foremost I went into a pretty deep one, and spluttered out the other side, wet through. Never mind, it was all in the day's

work, and I reached the bank and ran on in pursuit of the hounds. Alas! the deep chorus of the pack dwindled down to two or three feeble notes uttered by the youngest hounds. The drag was lost. The otter had given us the slip, and we must try for another. We came to an island where many an otter has been killed; the hounds worked around and about, but were mute. There was no otter there. As the banks of the river farther up were thickly wooded, and the river was hard to hunt, the master decided on going back and trying the river below Felton. It was then only half-past six o'clock, and yet it seemed as if we had done a fair day's work already. One or two men began to hang out signals of distress, while it was plain that the early rising had not agreed with others. The walk back through the meadows and woods was very pleasant; the perfume of the new-mown hay that was lying in cocks in the fields was most exquisite; the green of the grass and the foliage shone brilliantly through the gleaming drops of dew. To breathe the sweet fresh air was as exhilarating as to drink of the best sparkling wine. To some of us it was an utterly new experience, and we hoped the day would be long, for we wished to have as much of it as possible. Even the water itself had a cooler, fresher look in the early morning; it looked as though it had *bathed* itself and come out more brilliantly clear and beautiful. We tramped onward through the woods, where the rabbit rustled through the brake and bramble, and the jay flew screaming above us. The master in his scarlet coat, the brown dogs, the roughly-clad men, the whip with his long spear; no wonder we startled the sleepy gamekeeper who had just

turned out of his cottage and gazed suspiciously at us. Hitherto we had been the only people astir, we were 'monarchs of all we surveyed.' We might trespass and do as we liked, for there was no one to say us nay, and we felt in a delicious state of freedom and wildness.

Soon we reached the village, where there was scarcely any one astir. How superior we felt to those aluggards who at seven o'clock in the morning were yet in bed. There is no vanity so great as that of the early riser, and the seldomer he rises early the vainer he is when he does so.

We rested on the bridge while some one went to the inn to see that our luggage was forwarded to Acklington, where we should meet it. In the pool under the bridge the trout leaped merrily; they were most of them small, but what they lacked in size they made up in number; they swarmed like minnows, and jostled each other when an unlucky gnat touched the water, in their eagerness to get at it.

After a short rest, we proceeded down the right bank of the river, the hounds hunting less wildly than they did at first. After we had gone nearly a mile in silence, Beauty, a young hound, opened cry at a strong hover beneath the gnarled roots of a large oak. Most of the dogs followed his example, and it was the general impression that the otter was at home. The terriers were put in, men stationed themselves in the water at the fords above and below the hover that they might catch a glimpse of the otter if he bolted. Five of the heaviest men jumped up and down on the bank to shake the earth and frighten the quarry out. It certainly was a most ludicrous sight to see them jumping solemnly up and down as if suddenly gone demented. A large rat ran

out, and some one on the bank cried out, amid a roar of laughter, 'Tally ho! there's the otter! Oh law! no! it is only a rat.'

The hounds were called off, as the otter was evidently not at home. They soon after hit a burning drag, and raced off down the river at headlong speed, every hound joining in the mellow chorus. For half a mile the pace was severe, and it was 'bellows to mend' with some of us. On our right hand was the steep bank of the river, on the left a cornfield, and we ran along a narrow strip of meadow, the hay off which had been cut and was lying in cocks at short intervals. Over these cocks we had to jump, and as legs got tired their owners tripped and rolled over. Still the hounds ran on, and we were approaching a wood. It certainly would not do, I thought, for me to be behind any one else while racing through the wood, as I should get severely punished by the branches springing back from those in front of me. Therefore I put on a spurt, and got ahead just in time to be the first in the narrow path through the copse; a position I succeeded in keeping. We were now overtaking the hounds, which had hitherto kept us astern. They were not owning the scent so freely; they quested about the banks and swam to and fro in the water in an evident state of uncertainty. We came to a weir and a mill. Some men crossed over the weir, but they appeared to have so much difficulty in doing it, as they slowly picked their way along the slippery edge of the fall, the water rushing up to their knees, and a roaring pool below them, that the more prudent ones made a *détour* round by the mill. Here the hounds were quite at fault. Towler gave tongue up a burn, but it was only after a rabbit, and he got a

cut with the whip, and the warning 'ware rabbit.'

We found by experience that the river-bed below the weir was anything but safe wading. It is formed of sloping surfaces of rock, and when you step on the shallow end, as you must, you slip right away into deep water, and cannot help yourself.

Suddenly there was a cry and loud splash. Some one, in trying to jump down six feet of rock into the river bed, had caught his foot in a bramble, and came down head first, and a severe sprained wrist was the result. This was the only accident that occurred during the day, although there were, of course, many narrow escapes. A hound fell over at the same place, and this was the only slip I saw a hound make. As a rule, they are wonderfully sure-footed, stepping over tree-roots and scrambling up steep banks with the activity of a cat.

A whimper was heard behind us. We dashed back again, hunting the back track. Suddenly there was an angry challenge by two or three dogs who had lingered behind. 'Tally ho!'—the otter had been seen; and, feeling as fresh as we did five hours ago, we rushed to the spot. It was a reach of still, deep water. See! that train of bubbles along the surface! See! a round, bullet-shaped black head popping out of the water! It was the otter 'venting.' The dogs saw him, and hounds and terriers swam after him, encouraged by our voices. Backwards and forwards, from side to side, they swam, the water being intersected by the widening lines of ripple that followed the track of each dog, until it was marked across and across, like a church window with its diamond panes.

The otter at last took to a hover, the other side of the river, and the dogs bayed and jostled around it.

There was no one to help them. The river was deep and wide. It was not easy to swim with one's clothes on. There was no other way of getting across, however, so some of us took to the water, and reached the other side in safety. The entrance to the hover was under water, and it was with some difficulty that two terriers were put in it. The scene was a most animated one. Men were prodding with poles and jumping on the bank, and the dogs were literally frantic with excitement. It would evidently be a long job to dislodge the otter; and those of us who were not occupied stretched themselves on the fragrant hay, and tried to dry themselves in the hot rays of the sun, which glared down upon us from a cloudless sky.

I began to feel uncommonly hungry, and, rather than undergo the discomfort of an empty and clamorous stomach, I ran back to the mill, three-quarters of a mile away, and begged two huge hunks of bread-and-butter. With one in each hand I trotted contentedly back again, and satiated my hunger, washing the provender down with some whisky from my flask.

As it appeared impossible to make the otter bolt, a council of war was held, and it was decided to give up for the day. The master, too, had to attend a polo match in the afternoon, and he must get away by train. He blew a strong blast on his horn, the dogs were called off, and we trudged off to the mill. Some, however, were loth to go home without killing an otter, and at last it was arranged that half-a-dozen of us should hunt the hounds lower down the river.

We walked down for another mile without hearing any welcome note from the hounds. At last they tailed off up a burn, but still in silence. As the day was hot and

the hill steep, I and three others lay down on the grass, thinking it most unlikely that an otter would be found up such a tiny stream. Oh, how pleasant it was to rest after such hard work—to listen to the song that fell downwards from that speck in the blue sky—to watch the gay butterflies fluttering over the flowery slopes! One could go to sleep, it was so pleasant. But hark! Not only one hound was belling, but the whole pack—the sweetest and loudest burst of music we had heard that day. We got up hastily, and bravely breasted the hill down which the tiny burn was leaping. Alas! the gorse and bracken were nearly waist high, and our progress was greatly impeded. Still on we panted, and entered the very thickest and most brambly wood that was ever seen. The undergrowth was breast high, and under foot it was strewn with treacherous fallen branches that tripped one up, and rabbit-holes as traps for the unwary. Oh! it was desperately hard work, and we were almost dead beat. We must overtake the hounds, however. Hark how madly they give tongue! The cries of those ahead, too, were encouraging, and we heard that some one had had a view.

Thinking that it would be easier making one's way along the bed of the burn, we tried walking through the wood parallel to it, and some distance above it, as the hounds were doing. I dashed down to it, taking huge leaps over the under-wood. I alighted upon a sloping branch, and slipped. My legs flew from under me, and my head struck the earth only six inches from a sharp-pointed stake. I proceeded more carefully after that. Hurrah! there was the end of the wood. We had had a mile of it, and our veins were throbbing, our hearts were beating violently, and our 'wind' was gone.

We emerged upon a cornfield, where men were engaged in reaping the corn. The burn was here nothing but a ditch, and at the farther end of the field the hounds cast about at fault. They had over-run the scent.

‘We have lost him.’

‘Did you ever have such a run in your life?’

‘No; I cannot run another yard.’

‘Tally ho! tally ho! Tail him!—tail him there! He is making back for the wood. Stop him!—tail him!’

The otter leaped along like a cat right towards us across the field, and then turned off, when he saw us, towards the burn. The man who ‘could not run another yard’ made a rush at him, and, just as the otter slipped into the ditch through a bramble bush, he caught him by the tail and swung him up, holding him until the hounds came up, when he was thrown to them. He was not dead yet, however, and he made a vigorous fight, snapping and biting right and left. He was overpowered by numbers,

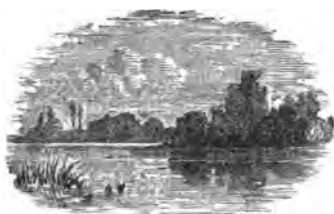
and at last a torn and mangled object was all that remained of a fine dog otter.

It was two o’clock. We were all frightfully hungry. It was extremely hot, and the flies were troublesome. We thankfully accepted the hospitable invitation to lunch of a neighbouring squire. A stampede was made for brandy-and-soda, to keep the cold out. Many of us were wet through. Then followed beer, a good beef-steak, sherry, cigars, and more brandy; for, in spite of the heat of the sun, we shivered in our damp things.

A walk of three miles brought us to Acklington. At the inn we managed, though not without some difficulty in procuring soap and towels, to have a good wash, and effect a thorough change of clothing.

We were, of course, stiff and tired, but were otherwise none the worse for our day’s otter-hunting.

I look forward eagerly to the next time I may hear the splendid cry of the otter-hounds, and be present at the ‘tailing’ of an otter.



'MAD AS A HATTER.'

(OLD SAYING.)

ALAS, how light a cause may move dissension between hearts that love! That's very true. But I'm not sure that it *was* so light a cause. Any way she oughtn't to have sold my hat. Old? well, I don't see what that has to do with the matter; and if you come to that, all hats will become old hats if you only keep them long enough. Besides, what man of refinement, of a poetic nature, of æsthetic tastes, loves not an old friend—coat—hat—man—or—woman? well, no, perhaps not exactly that—substitute another W, say wine—better than a new or young one!

But I don't put it on this footing at all. It was an act (1) of rebellion against my lawful and marital authority, as ecclesiastically, and with her own free will—*very* free will—and consent, bestowed upon me at the altar, and (2) it was a laceration of my individual feelings, an insult offered to what she must have known to be a well-established and, may be, off-ridden hobby. For, 'my love,' I had often said, using a conjugal and somewhat metaphorical expression—'my love, I have no insane objection to flowers of peripatetic growth, nor any morbid antipathy to antique vases (fresh from the potteries), purchased from the family of Moses during his suburban rambles; but when you have done making your own costly exchanges and have bartered for three geraniums and a glass milk-jug (blown, not cut), a dress not very much used, for which I had the happiness of paying, at no remote date, two, or it may be more guineas, I claim my privilege of being consulted as to

the final, or even the intermediate, destination of my own proper and virile garments.'

It was a long speech, and I am, habitually, a man of few words, but I was moved—moved to the very heart. What! mine own familiar friend, beneath whose shade I had often indulged in the pleasing thoughts and fancies—But, no mat-ter. I only wish to account for, and to palliate the emotional ejaculation which escaped from my pent-up bosom when she greeted me with the remark—playfully uttered more-over:

'I have sold your old hat, dear.'

The rejoinder I made, and I am sorry to place it on record, was this. I said, ——!

It was only one word. There were four syllables in it, it is true, but it seemed to me, nevertheless, an aggravation of my wrong, an adding of insult to injury, that she should at once assume an offended air, and look as if *she* were the injured party, and not I.

We had been married for three blissful years (more or less blissful), and up to that particular day, neither at bed nor board, had aught occurred to divorce us even for a single occasion. On that day, however, after washing and deliberating, I felt it incumbent on me to express my own displeasure in a manner that should be unmistakable, and strike terror, never to be forgotten, at once and for ever into 'the enemy's' breast.

I put on my hat—it was another hat, and it rather hurt—and without trusting myself to go through the parliamentary ordeal of 'catching the speaker's eye,' I

remarked, 'I am going to dine with Tomkins; when I have dined with Tomkins, I am going to town again.' And while my grasp was on the door-handle, I added, 'on business—business of importance.' There was nothing either sarcastic or unveracious in this supplementary close of my hard-hearted speech—she called it a hard-hearted speech many a time afterwards—neither was it a happy thought resuscitated. N.B. I don't think the very happiest thoughts bear resuscitation. I simply said what I meant, and what the interval of lavatory and meditative pursuits had instructed me to say.

It *was* on business, and the business was, as will presently appear, important.

My friend Tomkins—Jabez was his sponsorial prefix—my friend Jabez Tomkins, I say, was as good a fellow as any man need desire for a friend: 'trusty Tomkins,' we called him at Stubbs'—Stubbs, Weathercoddle and Mumblebury is an old-established firm to which we both belonged—not after that fashion of trustiness described by the immortal novelist in 'Woodstock,' but because no one who knew him would not have trusted him confidently with all that was dearest to him. Still Tomkins had his peculiarities: one of these was that, although a most matter-of-fact and open-minded person himself, he loved mystery in all that belonged to others. If a thing could not possibly be twisted by any effort of the most tortuous imagination into a mysterious fold, you might still and notwithstanding—*crede* Tomkins—'depend upon it there was something in it.' Another peculiarity of my dear friend consisted in a double, or rather alternative, greeting with which he invariably saluted his intimates. If you looked merry, ere you could speak Tomkins had

exclaimed, 'Hulloa, old fellow, what's up?' If, on the contrary, you looked sad, Tomkins ejaculated, 'Hulloa, old fellow, what's wrong?' In each case, if uncovered, he seized his hat; if he had it on, he took it off. No wonder, therefore, that, my soul being troubled and my spirit sad within me by reason of the loss of that particular tegument, I should hasten to disburden my sorrows to Tomkins.

He was at home when I called, as I knew he would be. Recognising me by the individuality of my knock, he himself rushed to the door, and nearly choked himself in his eagerness, on seeing my *triste* expression of face, to ascertain, while his mouth was full, what was wrong.

I told my friend that he must give me some dinner, and then some counsel, and after that, if needs be, his companionship back to the City. All of which he cheerfully undertook to do.

'It's a very mysterious business, my dear fellow—at least it will be—to recover that particular hat; but rely on me; if any man can help you, I can—and will. We must go back to London; we will take a cab; and, let me see, we will drive to Whitechapel direct.'

Thus Tomkins to me, after I had given him the few particulars, and one or two more, which are here set down.

'Whitechapel! Why Whitechapel?'

'Oh, don't you trouble, you leave the matter to me; we must keep it dark;' and then, after a moment's pause, and rising to ring the bell, he added with emphasis, '*very* dark.'

The cab was ordered, and we were soon *en route* for that region, which was to me as much *terra incognita* as Iceland or Siberia. As we lived in the neighbourhood

of Hammersmith, since by postal authority named W., and we were bound for Whitechapel, since christened E., and as there was then no (well-managed) Metropolitan Railway, we of course had a tolerably long drive in store. The first thing that forced itself on my attention during our progress was that Tomkins had already established a 'mysterious' understanding with the driver. For on each occasion that, for some cause or other to me unknown—and these occasions were of constant recurrence—Jabez wished to stop, the cab was pulled up with a suddenness which was not only mysterious to myself, but unpleasant. On these occasions Tomkins would always get out. 'Don't you stir, old fellow. Keep it dark. Three minutes.' These were his usual words while in the act of alighting from the vehicle. I observed also that our Jehu mostly got off his box, and that in every case there was a whispered conversation carried on between them. I didn't know whether to be amused or irritated by this absurd behaviour, as I thought it; but, as I was sensible, somewhere in my inmost consciousness, of playing myself a rather absurd part, I contented myself, or feigned contentment, when in reply to my questions I received the invariable reply, 'It is all right,' when I knew it to be all wrong, or 'Couldn't be going on better,' as if I were a newly-born baby or its blessed mother.

There was another thing I observed. On a plurality of 'stages' our driver made a very ready and cordial response to my friend's question—put with a due regard to keeping up the mystery and preserving inviolable secrecy—'What he would drink.' I alighted myself, I confess it, more than

once, partly from curiosity, partly from thirst; and it struck me that the voice of our Jehu on each occasion waxed not only huskier, but more familiar. I took it for granted, at about the thirteenth stage (at which I assisted), that the rubicundity of our charioteer's nose, and the knowing manner in which he caused his dexter fore-finger to encircle that feature as he uttered the words, 'Right you har, guvner,' and the hurried wink by which the voice and action were accompanied, were part and parcel of the mystery. I began to wish, though, that our drive were finished. And so indeed it was, or very nearly so; for ere we reached another stage, a violent collision and the immediate upsetting of the cab in the neighbourhood of that ancient monument Aldgate pump—since, I am informed, deceased—and the fracture of a shaft, to say nothing of my own hat (Nemesis, thought I) and poor Jabez's nose, brought us to, a little earlier than had we reached our final destination, at the corner of a certain popular thoroughfare called 'Petticoat Lane.'

Tomkins' nose was really very badly hurt; he took it, I suppose as part of the mystery, for the first words he uttered as we picked ourselves up were (to me), 'Keep it dark' (to the cabman, still prostrate with his horse, neither of which seemed to care about getting up again), 'All right.'

The man's reply was not, I thought, either a civil one or grateful. He was disentangled, however, and after some more whispering, a few expostulations, and the final payment of a coin (I learned afterwards it was a sovereign), Tomkins, with one hand to his nose, and placing

the other on my arm, once more uttered his invariable assurance that it was all right, and adding that we were close by, and must walk, pushed briskly on through the gathering mists of an April evening.

I took this opportunity, after having vainly endeavoured to straighten my hat, and sincerely condoled with him for his graver mischance (I *thought* I heard a muttered assurance that 'nothing could be better'; perhaps I was mistaken; his voice was deadened by the pocket-handkerchief he held to the lacerated feature)—I say I took this opportunity to remonstrate gently with my friend, and to beg he would give me some idea of his plan. First of all he endeavoured to put me off, next he upbraided me with ingratitude—'Had I not put the matter into his hands?'

It was not in human nature to withstand an appeal of this kind, made by a friend who had just suffered in the cause of friendship, and who rather 'snuffled' in consequence. However, at last I learned, not with unmixed feelings, that on each occasion of his alighting he had either run into the nearest police station, or else imparted to the officer on his beat the nature of my loss—errand, rather—with a general description of my unfortunate hat.

I must have been mad, you say, for such a trifling matter to go on such a fool's errand. Well, a good many others thought so at the time, cabby amongst the rest. But, not to anticipate, we continued our walk till we arrived at a certain massive stone of the obelisk order, on which I had ample time to observe, by the light of a flickering gas-jet in a shop hard by, the arms of the City of London. I say that I had ample time for making this

observation, which is quite true, because Tomkins, in a voice which the fog and the extemporised bandage of his kerchief rendered more than ever mysterious, and rather hoarse, whispered me that we must wait there a little while, which we did. In fact, we waited so long that at last, without a word of explanation, Tomkins, simply saying, 'Back directly,' at once plunged down the afore-mentioned thoroughfare.

Now, I will confess that this conduct on the part of my friend annoyed me. Besides, the evening was raw and chilly, and the April mist was depressing. I could forgive Tomkins much, especially as his nose, the bridge of which being broken I could not well get over,* had been fractured in my behalf; but my conscience was ill at ease, and my own nose was getting cold in the extreme, and what with a feeling that, whatever cause I might have had for my original annoyance, I had acted brutally at home, and that ever since, with the powerful aid of Jabez, I had been making an ass of myself, I resolved, after waiting some time to give Tomkins five minutes more, and then wait no longer. The truce having expired, I exclaimed aloud, and no doubt rather hastily and testily, 'Well, it's time for me to be off,' placing at the same time my hand on the spot which my watch and chain habitually graced. Simultaneously with my discovering that both watch and appendage had vanished, and the uttering of the same intemperate polysyllable which had already once before disgraced my lips, I felt a firm hand placed on my shoulder. At this moment Tomkins came up out of breath.

I was in no mood for laughter, as may be supposed, but really

* *Suum cuique*. This pun belongs, I believe, originally to Foote, the actor.

my poor friend's appearance was something so very peculiar (nothing offensive in that word), so very different from his ordinary neat, cleanly, and rather prim aspect, that, in spite of the dense air of provoking mysteries by which I felt myself bewildered, I couldn't help laughing a little. 'Good gracious, Jabez,' I exclaimed, 'what on earth have you been doing?'

It wasn't only that his nose was comically awry, and that his face was smeared with blood and his hat battered down, but he seemed to have undergone as complete a metamorphosis as Daphne did, poor nymph, when changed into a laurel or a gooseberry bush, or whatever it was. All his clothes were changed, and he looked as veritable a vagabond as any denizen of 'the lane' from which he had emerged.

Any further conversation on our part was put an end to for the present by the gentleman whose hand was still on my shoulder asking in a quiet voice of a bystander, 'Is this the other party?' and on receiving a reply in the affirmative, at once adding, 'Well, then let us be going; you look to him, I'll take charge of his' (I thought he said 'mad') 'friend.' He then whistled, and to my exceeding disgust, who should drive up to the curb in answer to this summons but our old friend the cabman, who grinned the while, opened the cab door, and stood by enjoying the fun evidently.

'Get in,' said my new friend.

'Get in! Get in where? and who the devil are you?'

'Oh, it's all right, I am going to take you to your friends; don't alarm yourself, it's all right.'

On hearing the well-known shibboleth, I naturally turned to Tomkins for an assurance that this was, although highly mysterious, at least true. For the

first time during the evening, I found, from the lachrymose, crest-fallen expression which rode uppermost above all his lacerated lineaments, that it was in reality all *wrong*. I saw, in short, that I must be my own champion.

'May I ask you to have the goodness to explain what all this means,' said I, in as imposing a voice as I could muster, to the man who seemed so resolved to accompany me.

'Oh, certainly,' and then, dropping his voice, and in a coaxing tone, as if addressing a fretful child, he said, 'we have found your hat; it's in the cab. Do come along, they'll be anxious.'

It was evidently no time to remonstrate. A crowd of small, dirty, grinning *gamins* was already gathering; and, piously devoting my old hat to the deuce, I

'Did,
'I knew not wherefore, that which I
was bid.'

I entered first, Tomkins next, and the two men immediately followed, when the treacherous Jehu at once slammed the door, and mounting his box, drove off at such speed that I conjectured, rightly enough, he was driving another horse, and for the matter of that another cab too.

We hadn't far to go. I had scarcely shaped my thoughts into words when the cab stopped beneath a gas-lamp, and we all descended. A moment more confirmed my worst fears: we were being conveyed to a police station, and our companions were in reality detectives.

'A neat kettle of fish, this,' I thought, the ludicrous side of the whole transaction (as I had nothing to fear) thrusting itself on me. Remember, both our hats were battered, Tomkins was tricked out in Seven-dials fashion, or, to

speak more correctly, Whitechapel costume; in addition to which his facial aspect was that of one fresh from a pugilistic encounter.

We were allowed to sit down—a good sign, I thought—and I noticed that while my own particular detective was engaged in giving details, no doubt of 'information he had received,' and so forth, the inspector from time to time looked at us with a rather comical expression. These stern functionaries do not, as a rule, indulge much in laughter, at least during business hours. I thought, however, that he would much have liked to engage in that forbidden pastime. At length, when a little transaction was quite completed on which 'the office' had been engaged, I ventured to address *M. le president*.

'When you are quite at leisure, sir, I should be glad'—this I thought was a sarcastic way of putting it—to be informed as to the reason of the quiet little drive and charming companionship' (bowing to my captor) 'we have just been enjoying.'

'Do you allude to your drive from Hammersmith?'

'No, not exactly; only the supplementary portion of it.'

'For a very good and kind reason I do assure you.'

'But I don't want any assurance; I demand to know as a right on what charge I and my friend have been brought and are detained in this place against our will. Perhaps you think I am drunk.'

'Oh no, certainly not—not drunk.'

'Mad perhaps'—this I said as a bitter jest. There was no jest in his reply, though, which was grave enough in all conscience.

'Well, we won't say you are mad; let it satisfy you that you are brought here to be taken care

of; and if you will only be quiet, your detention will be of very short duration. Your friends have been communicated with—'

'Who dares make,' I asked in a tremendous rage, 'any charge so preposterous as your behaviour implies?'

'I do, guvner, I do. It's all right. Keep it dark,' said a husky voice in the background. 'It's me, Sam Hall, as druv ye. I told the detective as I'd been and taken up two escaped lunatics as smashed my cab—'

'What!' I roared. 'This is too monstrous. Do you mean to say that you intend detaining us here, Mr. Inspector, at the instance of this drunken ruffian? I insist on leaving this vile place at once.'

'Well, and so you shall, only *do* be patient. You would hardly like to promenade the streets with your friend with that masquerade costume and prize-fighter's face.'

This was a poser. I certainly should not.

'At any rate,' I said, trying to turn the enemy's flank, 'here is my card, and—eh, what?'

'Well, what is the matter now?' asked the inspector, evidently glad of anything that would prolong the conversation peacefully till a given time.

This was the matter. On feeling in my pocket for my card-case, not only was there nothing of the kind, but my pocket contained not one single vestige either of purse or any portable property whatever. As to poor Tomkins, he had been stripped (literally) and robbed of the very handkerchief with which he was protecting and concealing his dishonoured features.

'I have been robbed of my watch, chain, purse, and everything I had about me,' I said; 'that is what is the matter; and my friend—'

'Your friend has apparently

been robbing some one else,' broke in the great man, with a humourous glance at Tomkins' garments.

'Not at all,' said that downcast ally; 'it was an exchange, and exchange is no robbery.'

'Ah, I see; and so you gave up a good suit, no doubt, for those rags—that was not a very sane act, was it?'

'You mean to say *I* am mad, too.'

'Oh dear, no. Pray don't excite yourself, there is no harm intended you, young gentlemen; on the contrary, you are evidently incapable of taking care of yourselves, and'—in a very decided voice—'from sworn information laid against or concerning you, I should not be doing my duty either to yourselves or any one else if I allowed you to go without some reponsible friend to take care of you; we should have you naked next, and then matters would be worse still.'

'And about my property?'

'Ha! let us hear about your property. Richards, take a description of the gentlemen's missing effects. Wasn't there something about a hat?' he added, maliciously glancing at our vile, battered head-gear.

'Hat! of course there was!' broke in Tomkins, with an air of triumph. 'Why, the whole mystery lies in a hat. It is for that I have—Hulloa! but where is it? I had it in the cab.'

'Had it; had what?' I asked somewhat testily.

'Why, confound it all, the object of our search.'

'That can't be, because my detective has it—at least he told me so——'

We were engaged in this acrimonious squabble when another active and intelligent officer made his appearance—they had only just changed the beats—and then

another, and again yet another, and, to my bewilderment and annoyance, every man of them brought in a diabolical-looking old *chapeau*, which would have disgraced a cow-keeper. Tomkins had contrived so well, what with his mystery and his keeping the matter dark, that he had convinced every policeman individually that we were both, if not raving madmen, at least in an advanced stage of idiocy or imbecility, and that any old tile would suffice to obtain the reward which he had munificently promised on its recovery.

When I looked round, and beheld all this grove of hats, each more villainous-looking than the other, and all assembled, so to speak, in my honour, I began to have a faint suspicion that the inspector and the cabman and the detectives were right, and that I was really mad. As for Tomkins, I was certain about him; Colney Hatch or Haawell was his proper abode, there could be no doubt of it.

And the worst of it was that with every newly-relieved officer and every 'fresh' hat a wider grin distorted the features of all present, until, on the arrival of five more men in a bunch, each with a separate hat, a roar of laughter shook the abominable stone walls and roof to their foundation.

No doubt I looked mad. I felt so; and when the newcomers turned from my glaring eyes to Tomkins' confounded togger, which they hadn't seen before, the brutes stood and laughed till their sides shook and the tears ran down their eyes. Even the inspector was past holding in.

It was at this supreme moment that the 'outer guard' appeared, ushering in 'a lady.' She too carried a hat (in whitey-brown paper). I had no time for in-

specting that though, for in one moment, with a passionate cry, my darling Araminta threw herself into my arms, and while reproaching, and sobbing, and weeping, and laughing, put the finish to the *tableau vivant*, and at the same time fortunately put an end to the guffawing of those detestable guardians of the peace—most of whom, doubtless thinking that their little game was now useless, incontinently absequeatulated.

It was the presence of a lady, no doubt too, which also restored the inspector to something like his accustomed gravity of demeanour. Addressing my dear spouse, he said:

'I presume, madam, that this gentleman—'pointing to me—'is your husband.'

'Of course he is. Every one knows that.'

'Every one of your neighbours, you mean. You will excuse me asking you if—if, in short, he is—in fact, quite right in his head?'

'I don't understand you.'

'The man who drove him and his friend from—from Hammer-smith, has sworn that they are both escaped lunatics—'

'Oh, the wicked wretch! Why, he has been home to dinner every day since we were married, three years next Wednesday.'

'What have you to say to that? Come forward, sir.'

'Why,' answered that treacherous driver of ours, 'I only judged by the owdacious way they was a-goin' on. What with what t'other one told me about an old 'at, and keeping of it dark, and the rest of it—Just look at him; if he ain't mad, all I can say he oughter be.' And truly there was in my poor friend's outward man a very insane appearance.

The inspector, too, whose doubts as to his sanity seemed to have been dispelled, evidently, on look-

ing at Tomkins, was once more shaken in his opinion. He was silent for a few moments, and then, addressing my wife, said:

'You see, these gentlemen have, to say the least, been acting in a rather mysterious manner, and I can scarcely be surprised at the impression they have left on more minds than one. They have only themselves to blame for any unpleasant consequences. I will just ask—Mr.—Mr. Tomkins, I think—a question or two. Pray, sir, what was your real object in driving, of all places on earth, to Petticoat Lane at this time of the evening?'

'Why, I had always heard that all property in the shape of second-hand clothes, &c., was sure to turn up there, and as my friend had—hem!—by mistake parted with a——'

'Yes, a hat; we know all about the hat. Be brief, if you please.'

'I thought it best to go to headquarters.'

'And you laid an information with every officer and at every police-station on your way.'

'Why, good gracious!' suddenly exclaimed my wife, 'if you had only waited, George, I could have saved you and your friend'—an emphasis on 'friend'—'a journey: that troublesome old hat of yours was only just round the corner at poor Smithson's. There was no difficulty or mystery at all about it. Directly you were gone I sent Mary round for it, and she bought it back for a shilling. Here it is. Petticoat Lane, indeed!'

The dear creature was getting strong from the superior position she was placed in, and of course was inclined to abuse her power: they are all like that.

'Very well, then; that part of the business—certainly rather a crazy one—being happily disposed of, may I venture to ask of your

discreet friend how he comes to appear in a costume not *quite* becoming a gentleman, and with a face as if he had been engaged in a pitched battle?'

The broken nose was readily accounted for, but it was with considerable reluctance that, bit by bit, poor Jabez had to humiliate himself by the confession that he had been persuaded by 'a party in the lane' that he would stand no chance of recovering the missing article—or of 'solving the mystery,' as he still insisted on calling it—till he was dressed like—in fact, like a prig, himself.

'And so you made the rather unprofitable exchange for those rags of, no doubt, a respectable suit of clothes.'

It was only too true; and by the crest-fallen appearance of poor Tomkins all seemed to judge that he had suffered ample punishment for his prying into the mysterious.

'Well, if you will give your names and addresses, I do not think, in spite of very unfavourable appearances, that I need detain you. An officer will call upon you to-morrow with reference to your watches and other missing articles. Perhaps,' he added, with a smile, 'if less mysterious in our proceedings, we may be more successful. Standing, get the lady a cab.'

'I've got mine outside,' shouted the unabashed Jehu.

'No. I have a word to say to you, cabman. Good evening, madam; take care, pray, of your friends.'

And with this parting shot the inspector was pleased to dismiss us.

As my poor friend was evidently in great pain, my dear wife's woman's heart was moved to compassion, in spite of her

private opinion of his bad behaviour, and nothing would satisfy her but that he should be our guest till the following morning. We supped off my dinner, *plus* a lobster, and over a comfortable glass, and by the side of a cheerful fire, late as was the hour, contrived to extract a little merriment even out of our own follies. Nor was it till the second glass was well 'entered' that, I brought in the *terribile causa* of all our woes, and, carefully cutting open the lining, produced, by way of accounting for and extenuating my anxiety about its loss, a roll of 'documents,' whose intrinsic value made both my wife and friend open their eyes in amazement.

'Well, all I can say is,' said 'my little woman,' 'if you were not mad to try to recover your hat, you were certainly crazed to stow away in such a hiding-place valuable papers and money you could not afford to lose, sir.'

'Ah, *there* indeed is a mystery. Do you remember, my dear, a certain boating accident, when a certain saucy little lady had to be fished out of the sea like a bunch of damp sea-weed?'

'Oh, George, dearest, don't, don't talk of it. Can I ever forget your bravery, and how you swam out so far—and it was then——'

'I transferred from pockets which I anticipated might become moist, to the despised old hat which I bore high and dry, what in fact I had, odd as it may appear, forgotten all about until you mentioned that you had kindly disposed of for—well a trifle—certain papers, stamped, signed, and so forth, the loss of which made us two simpletons act in a manner as if we were really "Mad as a Hatter."'

J. MONTAGU SIMS.



Drawn by R. Caldecott.

PAIRING-TIME.

OPEN! SESAME!

BY FLORENCE MARRYAT (MRS. ROSS-CHURCH), AUTHOR OF 'LOVE'S CONFLICT,'
'NO INTENTIONS,' ETC., ETC.

CHAPTER XXXI.

'I WILL FIND IT—IF IT IS TO BE FOUND.'

'COME in,' says Dr. Newall, as he takes Lady Valence gently by the hand, and draws her in front of the little fire. 'Come in, and tell us all about it.'

But with her animated speech the Countess's courage seems to have evaporated; and as she stands between the two men, whose eyes are turned inquiringly towards her, she looks more ready to weep than to declaim.

'Oh! what is there to tell!' she says despairingly; 'it is the old, old story—Valence is dying by inches. I had hoped so much from our visit to Mentone, Doctor. He seemed so different there: so young, and buoyant, and hopeful. But it is all gone again. The curse fell on him directly he re-entered the doors of Castle Valence, and I hardly recognise him for the same creature.'

'Has he resumed his midnight studies?' asks Dr. Newall.

'He has resumed everything that is most hurtful to his health; late hours, secret sittings, mysterious absences: and, above all, those fatal trances have again attacked him. He was in one—so he tells me, and from his appearance I can well believe it—for three hours last night. Sometimes he does not come to bed at all, and the morning finds him in that wretched library, with his pulse down to the very lowest ebb, and almost unconscious of what is passing around him. Oh! Dr. Newall, if this goes on much longer, he will really die!'

'I know it, Lady Valence.'

'But it must not be—it *shall* not be. Just now, too, when all life holds that is best and fairest is opening before his view.'

Here she stops and blushes vividly, remembering that she is alluding to that of which one at least of her listeners knows nothing.

'Forgive me, Mr. Bulwer. I hardly know of what I am speaking. If you only knew what I suffer, you would feel for me!'

'I do feel for you, Lady Valence, keenly. Dr. Newall will tell you that we were discussing this very subject, and the possibility of a cure, when you arrived.'

'And what did you say?' she demands, turning to the old man.

'I could only repeat, my dear, what I have said to you before: this disease lies in the brain. Distract the Earl's mind, disabuse his fancy, prove his imagination to have been a lie, and you will cure him—*perhaps*. Mind! I only say *perhaps*!'

'You think him *mad*?' she says in a low voice.

'Not hereditarily so, my Lady—not physically so, if I may use the expression. But that his abnormal studies have produced a temporary disturbance of the cerebral organisation, I have no doubt. Nothing else could account for the Earl's behaviour.'

'*Mad*!' repeats Lady Valence musingly. '*Mad*! good God! How horrible! And yet, had you

seen him just now as he rushed into my arms, pale and trembling, his dear brow bathed in a cold perspiration, and heard the loud beating of his heart as he told me that the brief interval of happiness we have enjoyed was but a diabolical delusion to make the death to which he is hastening more terrible to contemplate, you would indeed have said that he looked *mad*. He clutched me—poor darling—as though a weak, shaking thing as I am could be his support. And the pain in his eyes—the dreadful sense of pain stamped upon every line of his countenance—shall I ever forget it? It was this that made me come to you this evening, Dr. Newall; that made me feel that by some means or other an end must be put to this awful superstition. Oh! do not tell me that he is mad—that there is no hope for him!

'Heaven forbid that I should say so, my dear lady. When I call the Earl insane, I do so advisedly. The derangement would doubtless be but temporary, if the way of cure could be found. But how to find it, that's the question. How to find it!'

'I will find it—if it is to be found,' she answers grandly. 'No! don't look at me as if I were taking more on myself than I have any right to do. I have made a vow to heaven that, if need be, I will sacrifice my life itself to cure my husband, and I mean to keep to it. I know I am only a woman, and a very inexperienced and ignorant woman; but I love him, Mr. Bulwer, and I feel ready to defy all things, natural or supernatural, for his sake.'

'God bless you! I believe you would!' cries the young man, as he looks at her with unqualified admiration; 'and with the whole power of my strength I would assist you.'

'Will you work with me?' she retorts eagerly. 'Shall we penetrate this haunted room together, and drag all its hidden mysteries to light?'

'I will follow you, if need be, to the jaws of death itself. What do you suppose I would *not* do in Valence's cause?—he who is my best and earliest friend!'

'If we could but argue him out of his belief in the reality of these apparitions——'

'If we could but prove to him, beyond a doubt, that they are but the creations of his own diseased imagination——'

'Stop, my children! not so fast!' interposes Dr. Newall. 'You are reckoning without your host. Your proposals will not hold water. How can you reason a man out of the evidence of his own senses? Have you forgotten the midnight vigil you held with your husband, Lady Valence, and what you saw and heard during its continuance?'

Everil shudders and turns pale.

'Ah! no! How foolish I am! It is too real, too terrible a thing to be argued about. But what is to be done, then? Will he always believe in and follow them?'

'To believe is not necessarily to follow, Lady Valence. I believe in the possibility of supernatural visitations, and yet they never trouble me. No! your husband's researches have gone too far for that. Were you and my impetuous young friend here to rush pell-mell into the secret recesses of his heart, and strive to overthrow what is enshrined there as his most sacred belief, you would do no good whatever. You would only shock his sensibility, destroy his confidence in you, and leave him more closely wedded to his own opinions. His delusion is not that *such things are*. It lies in the trust he places in them

and their communications as being sent from heaven. If we can once prove to him that spirits are fallible, that their prophecies can be false, and even their supposed identity a lie, the cure would be effected. Lord Valence would not have the witness of his own senses turned against himself, but he would learn how little in the way of spiritual revelation is worthy our attention beside that which has been committed in trust for us to the keeping of the Church.'

'But how can we do this, Dr. Newall?'

'I have been pondering the subject very carefully, and I can see but one way to it. When I have made you acquainted with the theory of my plan it will be for your Ladyship to decide whether it is practical. Lord Valence fully believes he is to leave this world on the third of February, does he not?'

'On the third of February, at noon. And he constantly alludes to it, Dr. Newall, as a settled thing. Sometimes he wakes up suddenly in the night and thinks the time has come, and throws his arms about me to say farewell. And when I try to reason him out of the idea, he tells me it is of no use; that his fate has been determined since his birth, and that he feels the tide of life ebbing slower and slower with him every day. And, indeed, sometimes his pulse is scarcely perceptible. I cannot tell you how I tremble as the days go on.'

'You must leave off trembling now, Lady Valence, like a brave woman, as I know you can be, and take to acting instead. By fair means or foul, your husband must be beguiled into passing over the third of February without noticing the date.'

'But is that possible?'

'The possibility I leave to you.

You have a woman's ready wit, and must bring it all to your assistance now. If you can persuade the Earl by any means to live over the third of February without knowing it, his life is saved. He will see then the impotency of the prophecy in which he has placed so much trust, and I will guarantee his own good sense, which has been blinded by this infatuation, will prevent his ever placing faith in such revelations again.'

'To make him pass over the third of February without noticing it,' repeats the Countess, thoughtfully; 'but how to delude him? By what means to divert his observation?'

'You must work upon his feelings,' replies the doctor, decidedly. 'Bigoted as he is to this fatal belief, his Lordship must surely possess some of the feelings of a man. There are a thousand things that should be able to distract his attention from himself; your health for instance.'

'Oh, that I could die for him!' she exclaims suddenly.

'Valence would scarcely care to purchase his life at such a sacrifice,' says Bulwer.

'Do you not think so? That thought would make it all the easier. But we must not talk, Mr. Bulwer! we must think—think—think! Dr. Newall's suggestion has been like a ray of light to me, and at all hazards I am resolved I will succeed.'

'Depend upon my aid in any way that is in my power, Lady Valence, even to risking a rupture of the long-tried friendship between your husband and myself.'

'As I would risk his love for me! Oh! I see we shall be true allies, Mr. Bulwer, and I thank you for it.'

She holds out her delicate hand as she speaks, and permits him to clasp it firmly.

'Yet if we should fail!' she continues, breaking down, 'if we should fail!'

The Joan of Arc spirit has departed again. She is once more a woman, and the two men hasten to exert their privilege of protection and consolation.

'We will not fail,' says Bulwer, confidently. 'Newall and I will put our heads together, Lady Valence, and take no rest until we have hit on some expedient that appears possible.'

'And meanwhile, my dear young lady, you will consider too, and you will not forget to pray for our success; and between us three, we are sure to find some way out of this apparent labyrinth of difficulty.'

'The third of February, and this is the tenth of January! It is so short a time,' she says mournfully.

'No time is too short for God,' is the old man's reply.

'Then I will go now, lest he should discover and be angry at my absence; and you two will consult together, and let me know everything in the morning. How can I thank you enough,' she says sweetly, as she turns and smiles upon them through her tears.

'We will not take your thanks till we have earned them,' replies Bulwer. 'But you must not return to the Castle alone, Lady Valence. Let me see you through the grounds.'

'No! I would rather not! Some one might meet us, you know, and it would look so strange.'

She says this half laughing, and touching the shawl she has wrapped about her head. 'I shall not be a minute running up to the Castle. Good night, Dr. Newall; you have done me all the good in the world; you have given me hope. I shall go home and pray that a way may be opened, and it

must come—it must come!' and before they have time to reassure her, she has left the cottage and is running through the darkness in the direction of her home.

The Castle hall and corridors are always lighted, but the place is so immense that the best of lamps leave it but gloomy. No one encounters Lady Valence as she steals up the wide staircase and into her own bedroom, where a light is dimly burning; but as she closes the door behind her, a figure starts up from the shadow of the dressing-room beyond, and advances to her. It is her husband.

'Why, Valence, dearest,' she says cheerfully, 'you here, and in the dark! What have you been doing? Are you not well?'

'What have you been doing? That's more to the purpose,' he answers, almost roughly. 'And where have you been? What makes your hair so untidy, and what is this shawl upon your arm? I want to know all that.'

She stops for a moment confounded. To tell him she has been to Dr. Newall will be to rouse his worst suspicions and place him on his guard, and yet Everil is not the woman to tell a lie.

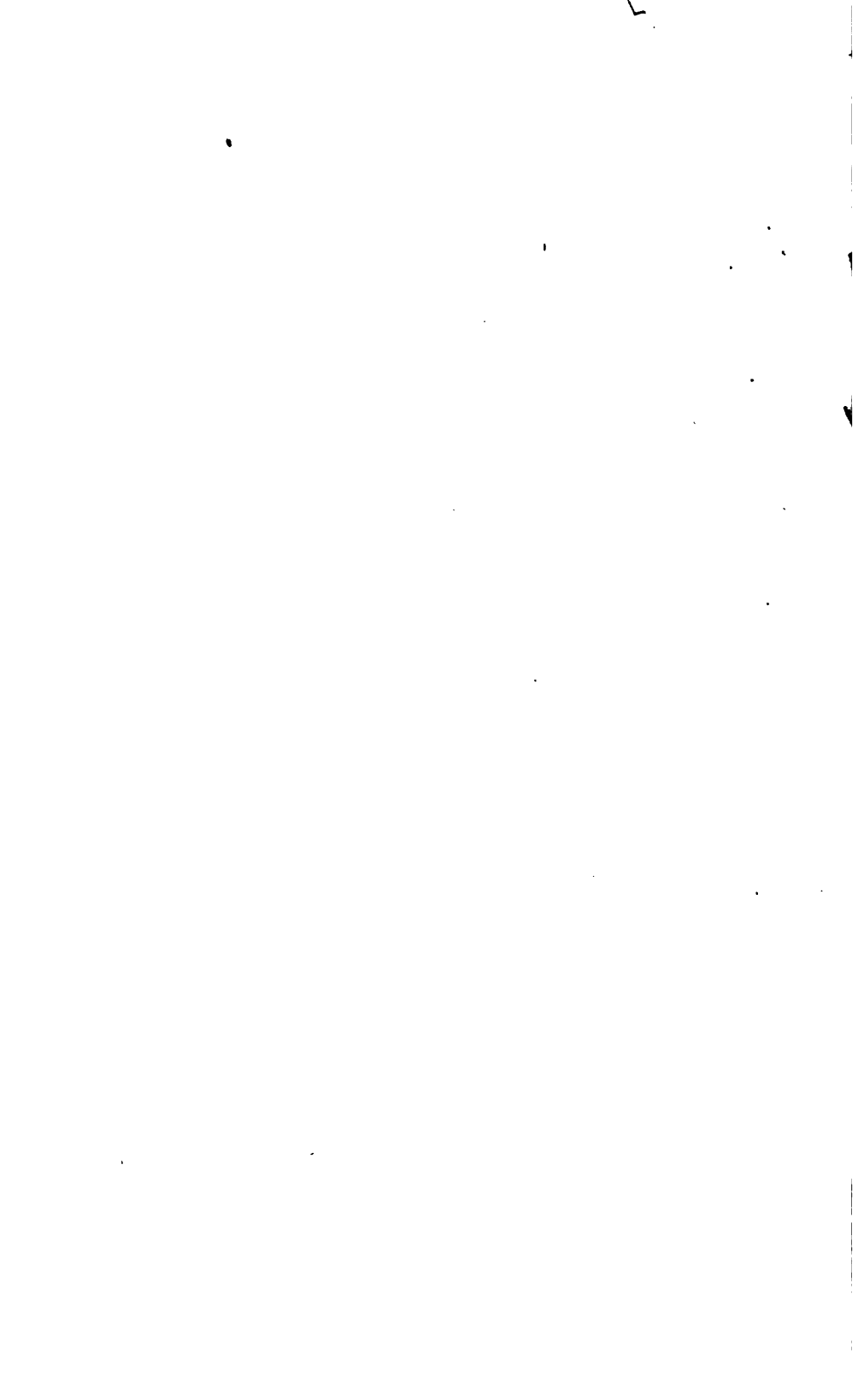
'I have been in the garden with this shawl about my head,' she answers, with an attempt to speak lightly. 'A stupid creature, am I not, to risk neuralgia and toothache and every sort of ill by braving the night air? But I was nervous, Valence, and excited, and I wanted to cool myself.'

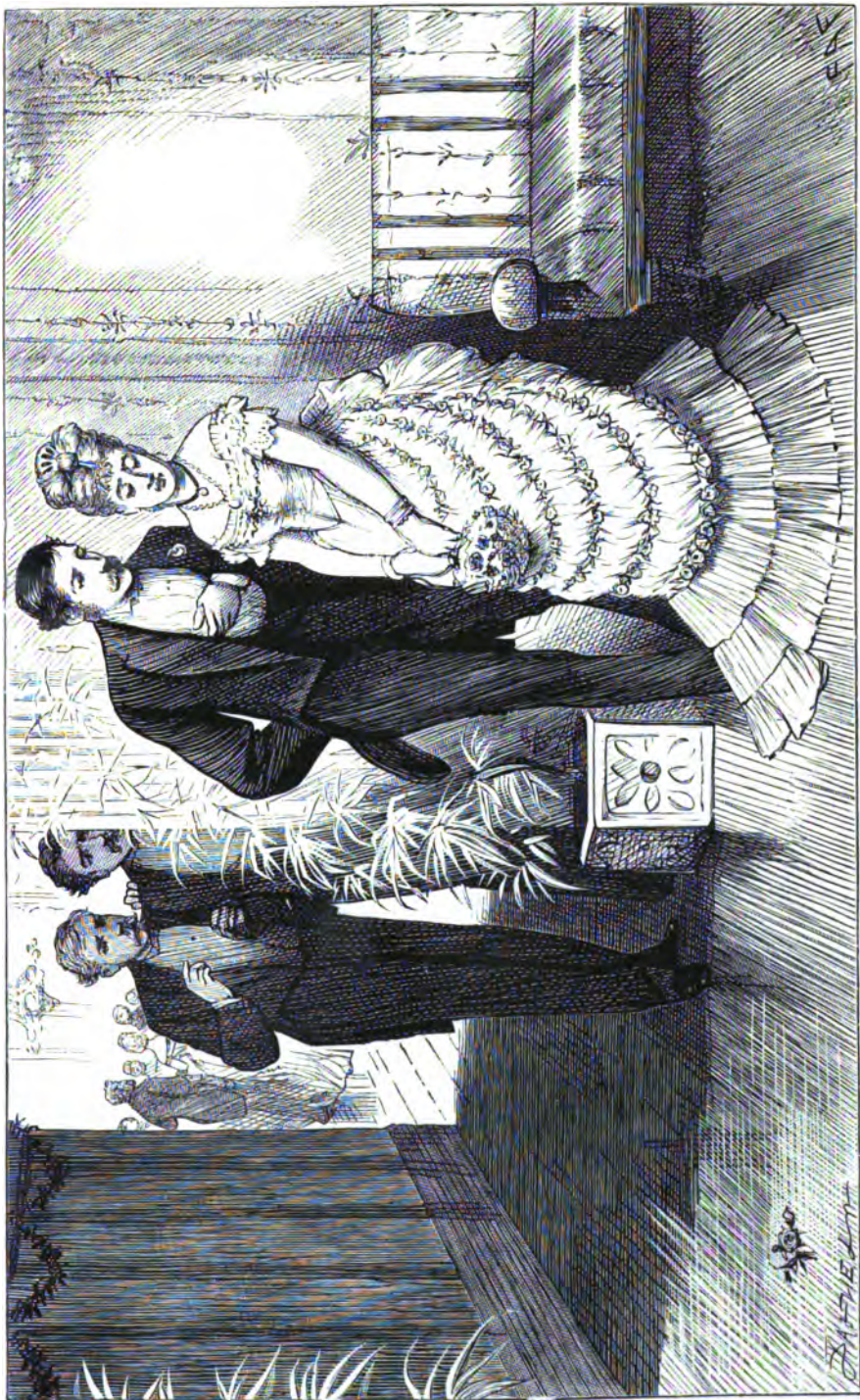
'Nervous and excited! Pray what excited you?'

'Well, to tell you the truth, dear love, you did. How can I help feeling nervous when you speak to me as you did this evening? Not only nervous, but miserable. You forget how my life is bound up in your's, Valence.'

For a moment he seems about



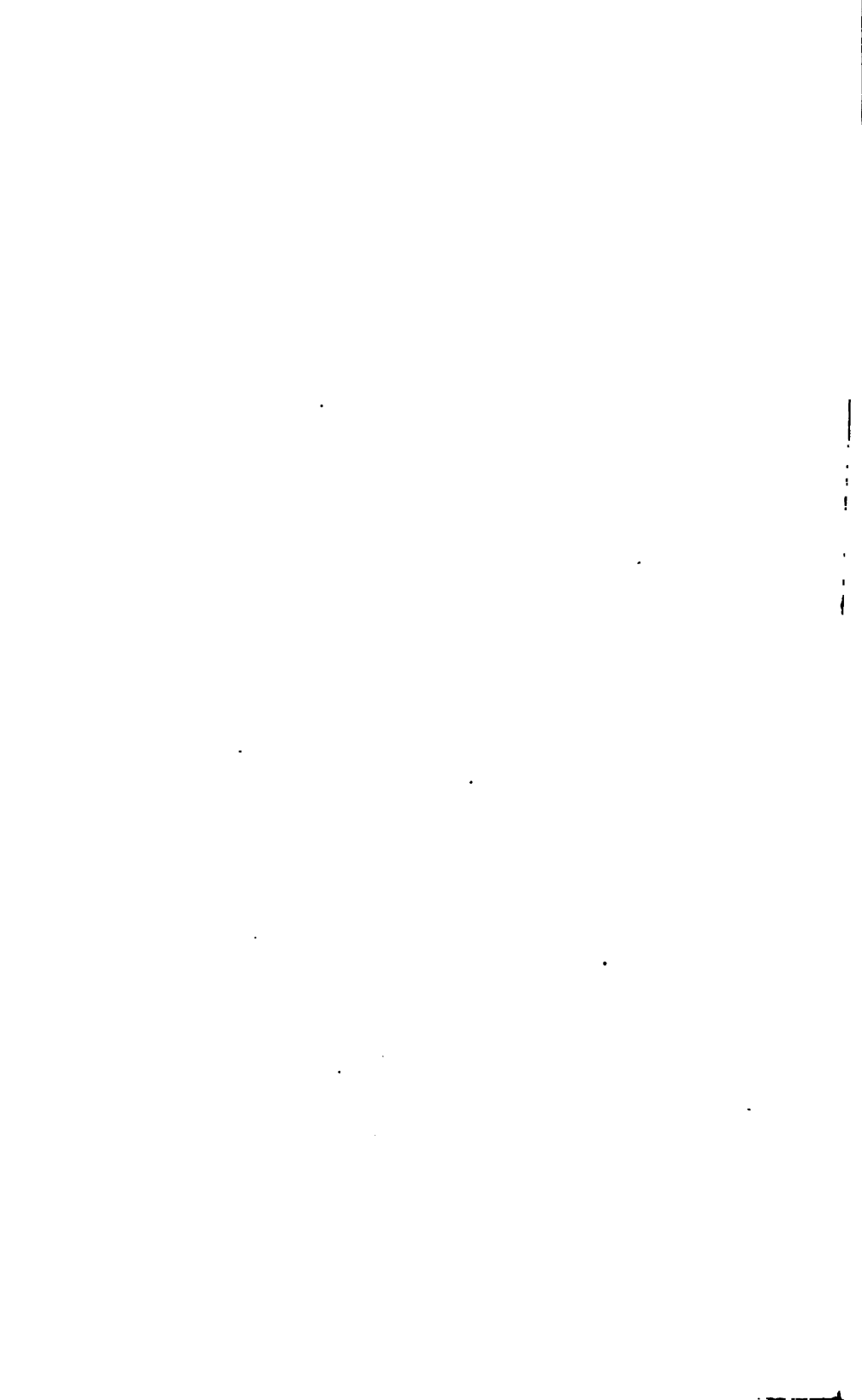




Drawn by F. A. Fraser.]

OPEN SESAME!

“Two figures stand in front of them, conversing.”



to relent, and submits to the caresses she showers upon him; but the next, a sudden remembrance strikes him, and he turns impatiently away.

'I see no reason why you should risk your health also. Did you go alone?'

'I went alone, Valence!'

'Did you come back alone?'

'Yes!'

'Did you see any one whilst you were out?'

'Why do you ask me? What can it signify?'

'Do you suppose it signifies nothing to me if you steal out in this surreptitious manner to meet any one or not? Do married ladies—hostesses—usually desert their guests to walk about their grounds after dark, with nothing but a shawl twisted about their heads, and with no object but to "cool" themselves? Answer me, now! Was this walk an assignation or not?'

She has never seen him look like this before, nor heard him speak in such a voice of anger. His cheek is flushed, his eyes are blazing; he has actually seized her by the arm. Everil's pride begins to stir.

'Of what do you accuse me?' she says loftily.

'I accuse you of nothing; I only say that it is by a strange coincidence that you and Captain Maurice Staunton (the gentleman who gave you the flowers, you may remember) should have left the house at the same moment, and remained absent for the same time, and at such an hour as this, too! strange, but true.'

He throws away her hand and ceases speaking, as though waiting for a reply. But none comes. Everil remains silent.

'Well, madam!'

'What do you expect me to say?'

'I wish you to deny the accusation I bring against you—if you can! To tell me that you have not been walking about the garden to-night with that brute Staunton.'

She is about indignantly to refute the assertion. She is about to cast her arms about her darling's neck, and entreat him to tell her who has dared to poison his mind with such an infamous falsehood concerning her faith to him, when a thought occurs to her; a voice commences ringing in her ears: '*Work on his feelings. Bigoted as he is to this fatal belief, his Lordship must surely possess some of the feelings of a man. There are a thousand things should be able to distract his attention from himself.*'

Is this one of them? Everil pauses, considers, trembles, and remains voiceless and impassive.

'You don't deny it!' continues the Earl in a low tone, full of agitation. 'You are silent, when a word from you would put an end to all my suspicions. I have watched that man closely, and I am not deceived; he cares for you! God! what will you make me believe next?'

'You must believe what you choose, Valence,' she answers in a trembling voice—the voice of the martyr who has the stake in view, yet walks up boldly to it—'I decline to refute the accusation you bring against me.'

'You refuse to satisfy my doubts! Is it wounded pride or *guilt* that keeps you silent, Everil?'

'You can attribute it to the motive you prefer.'

'Good heavens! that I should live to hear you speak to me like that! Do you know what you are doing? Do you know that you are causing the most violent emotion of which my nature is capable, and that I cannot answer for the consequences that may

follow such an act? I told you the other day, and I repeat it now, that if you once give me cause for jealousy, you will raise a demon you will find it difficult to quell. And yet you can stand there quietly, and tell me you decline to refute the accusation brought against you!

'No law, social or religious, compels us to refute an unjust charge.'

'You allow it is unjust then?'

'I allow nothing! I consider that I am authorised in taking a walk through my own grounds, if I so choose, at any hour of the day or night, and I deny the right of you or any one to question so simple a proceeding.'

'I do not condemn the fact of the walk, though it was imprudent. I demand only to know if you were accompanied by any one.'

'And I refuse to say.'

He looks at her for a moment without speaking; then, with a face white with mingled anger and pain, he rushes from the apartment.

Lady Valence waits until the sound of his receding footsteps has died away before she ventures to lock her door and give vent to her real feelings. Then sinking down on her knees by the bedside, she buries her face in the yielding drapery, and groans in the anguish of her spirit.

'Can I do it? Can I go through with it? Shall I live to see the completion of so terrible a task? Yet for his sake!—*for his sake!* That thought must be my watch-word, even if I die.'

CHAPTER XXXII.

'APPEARANCES ARE DECEITFUL.'

No immediate consequences follow this outburst from the Earl. The Countess comes down smiling to

the breakfast-table the following morning; the business of the day proceeds as usual, and if Valence's brow is a little overclouded, and his manner curt and undecided, his words are too changeable to excite much observation, and no one appears the wiser for the scene which took place in the bedroom the night before. How constantly it is the case in this world! Captain Spooney is so attentive to his wife, so anxious to anticipate her wishes, so particular in calling her by names of endearment in public, that his acquaintance would not believe it possible that whenever the Captain's temper has been ruffled he vents his ill-humour by pinching Mrs. Spooney, and knocking her about, and wreaking his petty malice by a thousand contemptible denials of her food, or her money, or her pleasure. Pretty, languid Mrs. Butterfly, too, who always speaks to her husband as 'my dearest love,' and appears periodically with her hair or her dress arranged in the most unbecoming style because 'dear Edward' prefers it in that fashion, how astonished the gulleible and uninitiated are when she walks off one fine summer's morning with Lieutenant Prancer, of the cavalry, and to find subsequently, when they appear in print, that the unsuspecting lieutenant is but the tail of a long list of co-respondents.

The World is not an innocent creature by any manner of means; yet the World is certainly very easily beguiled by appearances, or, rather, we should say, the World shuts its eyes determinately to that which should not be. Perhaps in the laudable desire to do as it would be done by.

It is content to take things as they appear, which is, after all, the least troublesome method to pursue. The guests at Castle

Valence are content to take their host and hostess as they appear, at all events for a day or two. But after that time the change becomes more visible. The Earl's usually languid and apathetic manner has given place to a restless anxiety, which seems to render him incapable of keeping quiet. His eyes are always watching the Countess; his cheeks burn with a hectic flush; he appears to be inwardly consumed by some devouring fever.

Everil, on the contrary, grows apparently livelier day by day. Her laugh is oftener heard than it has ever been before; it is certainly harsher and louder than it used to be; but that may arise from her high spirits. She does not appear to take any notice of the Earl's changed demeanour, nor even of himself; but much affects the society of Alice Mildmay, with whom she has secret jokes that are confided to none of the rest of the company, unless it be to Maurice Staunton, who has a faculty of hanging about these two ladies, and holding whispered conversations with them, that is, on occasions when by so doing they cannot offend society.

Mr. Mildmay, who never liked Captain Staunton in the olden days, and has conceived an honest affection for his intended son-in-law, John Bulwer, watches the triumvirate with eyes of suspicion. He is not pleased at Captain Staunton's increased familiarity with his hostess; still less at his apparent intimacy with his daughter. He does not like to mention the subject to Bulwer, lest he should be the means of rousing his suspicions unnecessarily; but he unbosoms himself freely to Miss Strong, who is as cognisant of the evil as he is.

'I am an old-fashioned individual, and I may hold very anti-

quoted notions,' he says to her one day, after a luncheon, during which Everil and Alice have appeared to be entirely engrossed by Maurice Staunton's attentions, and the Earl has left the table abruptly, and without apparent cause; 'but I don't like the way in which these young people go on, Miss Strong. Everil was always wilful and headstrong—you and I know that to our cost; yet I used to think her heart was in the right place, and she knew what was due to herself as a gentlewoman; but to see the manner in which she permitted that young Staunton to go on with her to-day at the luncheon-table, it was romping, madam, positively romping; there's no other name for it. I don't wonder the Earl was annoyed. Why Captain Staunton was ever asked down here I cannot imagine. There are circumstances in the past connected with his name which should, I think, have prevented Everil from allowing him to become her guest; and to have my daughter mixed up with it all. It disturbs me greatly!'

'Oh! pray don't speak of it so seriously, Mr. Mildmay, or you will alarm me. I was as surprised as you could be to find Captain Staunton here; but dear Everil assures me he was invited by her husband, and not herself; so what could the poor child do but submit?'

'Submit! Pooh! nonsense! It's one thing to have the man staying in the Castle—though I question that as a sign of good taste—and another to flirt with him openly as she is doing now. No one could help observing it, Miss Strong! I call it scandalous, and I won't have Alice's name dragged into any such affair. If John Bulwer won't interfere, I shall.'

'Would it not be better to speak to Alice yourself? To men-

tion the subject to Mr. Bulwer will be to create an open scandal. You cannot speak of Alice without inculpating Lady Valence.'

'Yes! you are right! And your duty, Miss Strong, is to speak to the Countess.'

'To Everil! Oh, Mr. Mildmay! you do not know the task you are setting me. You may remember how ill she bore coercion even in her schoolgirl's days. What will she say if I venture to reprove her now, when I have no possible right to do so?'

'You have the right of old acquaintance and long-trying affection. You have the right of Right, which should be the strongest right of all. Speak to her plainly, Miss Strong; no half measures ever took with that girl. Ask her what Staunton is doing here; tell her what people are saying about it; urge the interests of her husband, her position, and herself, upon her; and let her do her worst afterwards if she will. Your duty is clear before you.'

'If you think I ought, I will, Mr. Mildmay; but it seems taking a great deal upon myself.'

He draws her to the window, and points across the leafless park, where, in the distance, two figures saunter close together. They are not so far off but that she can distinguish them to be the Countess and Captain Maurice Staunton.

'Look at that, and don't talk such nonsense,' he says sternly. 'You might as well say it was taking too much upon yourself to drag a would-be suicide back from the brink of the grave.'

'And when we first came here she seemed so devoted to her husband,' says Miss Strong mournfully.

'Appearances are deceitful,' replies the Rector, just as Mrs. West, muffled up to the chin in sables, with Arthur, arrayed in black

velvet, by her side, comes tripping into the room.

'Where is dear Everil?' she inquires, with one of her sweetest smiles.

'Walking in the park with Captain Staunton,' growls Mr. Mildmay. 'She appears partial to the company of that young man, Mrs. West.'

'Oh! it is so good of her, isn't it, when I know she would rather be in a dozen other places? But that is just like dear Everil! She is always sacrificing herself for other people. I say she is a perfect martyr.'

'It's a pity she confines her martyrdom so exclusively to one person, though. It would not be the less martyrdom for being divided occasionally, at least, that's my opinion.'

'Do you mean Maurice by "one person"? Does Everil martyrise herself oftener for him than her other guests? I'm so glad to hear it. She used to snub him dreadfully (he's not much of a favourite with her, you know), and he felt it very much. It is kind of her to walk with the poor fellow. He will be so proud of her condescension. I really must thank Everil, for Maurice is my guest. You know dear Lady Russell and I are such bosom friends.'

'Don't you think you could take Captain Staunton off Lady Valence's hands occasionally, then?' puts in Miss Strong, bravely. 'The Earl seemed rather put out at luncheon to-day because she could talk to no one else.'

'Has Valence been confiding his private annoyances to you?' exclaims Agatha, with wide-open eyes.

'Oh, no! of course not! The Earl and I are not on such intimate terms; only I thought—it was impossible not to observe—'

But here the old lady's elo-

quence is interrupted by Mrs. West's merry laugh.

'Dear, dear! How comical! I only wish dear Valence could hear you. What would he say!'

'I should be very much concerned if any remark I made to you in confidence *did* reach his Lordship's ears,' stammers Miss Strong, with a heightened colour.

'My dear creature! I wouldn't be the one to repeat it for the world. Why, he would bring the whole Castle down about our ears. Everil and he are the most absurd pair of turtledoves you ever came across in the whole course of your existence. They are always billing and cooing, and going on with their lovers' nonsense. And the idea of any one taking a story to Valence *against* his wife! Why, he'd kill the messenger! That's my belief.'

'I'm so glad to hear it!' quoth the duenna, with a long-drawn sigh of relief.

'The idea of your dreaming otherwise! I never heard such an absurd idea! Come, Arthur, we will go for a walk, and meet these two arch-plotters on their way home. Auntie Everil will thank me greatly for exchanging cavaliers; and I'm not sure that I shall object to the arrangement either.'

'Do you hear that?' says Miss Strong, as the little widow and her child disappear.

'Yes, I hear it; but I shall speak to Alice all the same.'

'But now I come to think of it, Mr. Mildmay, I did hear a rumour, before I came to the Castle, that Mrs. West and Captain Staunton were going to make a match of it; in which case he would become a sort of brother-in-law to our dear Everil. Don't you think we have been rather premature in our suspicions?'

'Perhaps so. I hope we may

have; but I shall speak to my Alice nevertheless,' repeats the Rector, with the dogged obstinacy inherent in his sex; 'and if you know your duty, you will do the same by Everil.'

'Oh, yes, I certainly will speak to her,' replies Miss Strong, reserving to herself the right of judgment as to what she shall speak about. The old lady is not timid, but she has no notion of burning her fingers before she knows what may be in the pie—an excellent feeling of caution, for which many of us would be the happier if our well-meaning but impertinent friends occasionally exercised it on our behalf.

* * * * *

'You must be more cautious. The rat is beginning to make himself apparent to the senses of the household,' says Agatha West, in a whisper, to Maurice Staunton, as she meets him in the centre of one of the long corridors.

'In what way?'

'Old Mildmay and old Strong have been pumping me this afternoon. They evidently think your attentions too particular. They even went the length of hinting that Valence is annoyed by them; but I think I put *that* idea out of their venerable heads.'

'What did you say?'

'Made out that Everil and Valence are the most devoted of lovers, and that if you had a *penchant* for any one, it was my unworthy self. And I really think you must make a little love to me occasionally, my dear boy, just to keep up appearances, at any rate in their presence—unpleasant, I dare say, but useful—and a hint to Everil will set *her* mind at rest upon the matter. Not that she appears as though she required much conviction of the truth. I almost think, myself, sometimes, that she is rather too open in

showing her preference for you. How is it all going on?"

'Famously! I had no idea she would come round so soon; she has been so cold and reserved towards me since her marriage—until now.'

'Oh, that was all fudge—just put on for the sake of appearances. I told you so long ago. Why, she was desperately in love with you, Staunton; and, for all that's said against the sex, women don't forget quite so easily as that. When you threw the poor girl over, I thought she would have gone mad.'

'Don't use that horrid term, "threw her over." You know the absolute necessity there was for my conduct on that occasion, and how we mutually agreed that the only thing to look forward to was—*this that is coming.*'

'True! And it seems to be coming fast enough, doesn't it? I never saw Valence look so awfully ill as he does at present. Only, for heaven's sake, be careful! There is such a thing as going too far. You don't want the mine sprung before its time, do you?'

'How do you mean?'

'What are you working for?—the hand of the widowed Countess of Valence, or ——'

'You need not finish your sentence. I know what you would say. You may scarcely believe me, Mrs. West, when I reply that I am working only to obtain the woman whom I love——'

'Good heavens! Wonders will never cease! But you know the bulk of her property is settled on herself?'

'I don't think it would make any difference to me now if it were not. I always cared for her. Time-serving as you give me credit for being, you will not deny that; and since she has been the Countess of Valence, and treated me with such superb disdain, my passion

has become almost a madness. With money or without money, at all costs, I am resolved to win her, if only to have my revenge for the disappointment she has caused me.'

'Well, you seem to be in a very fair way of accomplishing your ambition, so you need not talk so loudly as to apprise the whole Castle of your intentions. To tell you the truth, the change in Everil's behaviour towards you has amazed me; for I really thought she was beginning to care for her husband.'

'Ha! ha! ha! Poor Valence! Well, he would not enjoy her preference very long, at any rate, would he? Do you think he suspects anything?'

'I cannot say; he has not mentioned the subject to myself. But he is entirely absorbed in his own prospects, and has little time to speculate on those of other people. Besides, it was not a love-match on his side either, remember.'

'Hush! Some one is coming up the staircase.'

'*N'importe!* The more you and I are seen together the better, Staunton; it diverts suspicion. I have but one word more to say to you, however. Be cautious! The end cannot be far off now; and it's no use making an *esclandre* in the family for nothing.'

'I will try; but I confess Fate is becoming too much for me, and things must take their course. Good-bye. We shall meet again at dinner.'

He moves off in the opposite direction just as Mr. Mildmay comes toiling to the head of the staircase. Agatha affects to be much confused as he confronts her.

'Now, Mr. Mildmay, I call this shameful of you,' she says, with the giggle of a schoolgirl, 'coming up the stairs in that stealthy way. I vow we should have an Act of

Parliament passed to prohibit gentlemen from wearing velvet slippers in the house; they are altogether too dangerous.'

'I hope your deeds will bear the light, Mrs. West,' he answers jocosely.

'Oh, dear! I trust so; but still there *are* moments—I hope you didn't see who went down the other staircase, Mr. Mildmay!'

'It was Captain Staunton—was it not?'

'Oh, you dreadful old man! What eyes you have! I cannot stand being looked at in that fashion. I shall run away at once to hide my blushes.' And, suiting the action to the word, away trips the pretty Cat to her own apartment. As she reaches it her face changes.

'What on earth does Maurice intend to do?' she thinks to herself, with knitted brows; 'and Everil, too? She can never be so mad as to contemplate anything more imprudent than an indecorously early abandonment of her widow's weeds. Valence will die childless. The greater amount of her money is tied up on herself. What advantages will precipitation bring them?'

The little widow, who has spent her life in plotting and planning, is for once puzzled. She cannot understand the tactics of her friends, but she knows it is not her interest to circumvent them.

'Whatever happens,' she muses, 'nothing can prevent poor Valence's death, and my darling child's accession to the title. Thank Heaven for that!'

And the woman really does thank Heaven as she says the words. Were you to take a knife and place it in her hands, and tell her she might just as well thrust it in the Earl's heart as follow the course she is pursuing with him, she would be infinitely shocked at your pro-

posal; but she has so long contemplated his death as a fact of which the moment alone is wrapped in uncertainty; she has acted the part she acts towards him for so many months, that it has become an integral portion of her nature; and she does not appear less womanly, and benevolent, and truthful to herself than any other person who spends his existence working for a certain end in which all his hopes are centred. There have been such cases of moral self-deception before now. There are women (women far more frequently deceive themselves than men) who go on lying day after day, till their views of right and wrong get so distorted that they actually do not know when they are speaking the truth or not. It may be supposed also that some of these wretched murderesses (like Charlotte Windsor for instance) ply their hellish trade until the smothering of an infant more or less makes no great difference in their habitual slumbers; and most assuredly repeated crime, and even the repeated contemplation of crime, blunts our sensibility and deadens the warnings of our conscience to that extent that we become unfitted to judge of the enormity of sin, and of the effect it has upon our own souls and those of others.

Agatha West is in this condition. Little by little she has accustomed herself to think of and hanker after forbidden things, until no step appears to her too bold to hazard in the attainment of her object, and she can even view that saddest of all sights, a fellow-creature pulled down to the depths of iniquity, with calmness, so long as the action tends to bring about the fulfilment of her own ambition.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

'THANK GOD! IT WILL BE SOON OVER.'

A LITTLE while longer and Rumour and Suspicion are resolved into Certainty; there is no doubt at all that the Earl and Countess are no longer upon friendly terms with one another.

The very look of misery they both present (Valence continually, although he tries to hide it by a haughty bearing which but renders the fact more sadly palpable, and Everil by sudden fits of gloom, alternated by an apparently heartless gaiety), convinces the spectators of the truth of their belief.

Lord and Lady Valence do not often speak to one another before their guests, but when they do their words are of the coldest, and sometimes worse than cold. This is especially the case on one particular morning, when the subject of balls is introduced at breakfast, and Captain Staunton confesses his love for dancing, and reminds his hostess of the many pleasant evenings they have passed in that pursuit together.

'Do you suppose I have forgotten them,' she utters plaintively, 'and when they were the last opportunities I had for such enjoyment? I have never danced once since my marriage.'

'You don't mean to tell me so!'

'How could I? Haven't I been shut up in this dull old castle ever since, with hardly a neighbour within ten miles of me? If some of my old friends had not occasionally taken compassion on me, as you are doing now, I believe I should have died of sheer ennui.'

Mr. Mildmay looks across the table at her with a frown.

'What an absurd speech to hear proceeding from the mouth of a young lady who has health and

strength, and horses and carriages, and every luxury that the heart of man could wish, or his brain invent!'

'But, papa, a woman wants something at times besides the company of dogs and horses,' interposes Alice.

'Hold your tongue, miss! I didn't speak to you.'

'A married lady,' observes Miss Strong, 'should always have sufficient society in the presence of her husband.'

'How can you tell, Miss Strong?' exclaims Alice, laughing. 'You've never tried it.'

'For which you may reply, "Thank Heaven!"' responds Lady Valence sarcastically.

'To return to the subject we were discussing,' says Maurice Staunton, in his bland voice. 'You have never thought of giving a ball here, I suppose, Lady Valence?'

'No! Who would come to it?'

'Everybody, I should imagine, who lives within a reasonable distance. They would be only too glad. You really should have given a house-warming.'

'We have never been accustomed to give balls at Castle Valence,' says the Earl coldly.

'That is no reason why we should not begin,' retorts his wife.

'I consider it is every reason. I should not care to have a ball here, especially now, when my health is so indifferent. I could not stand it.'

'But I could, and you would not be called upon to take any trouble in the business. Captain Staunton, I think yours is a brilliant idea. I am quite excited about it. I wonder how soon one could contrive to get it up.'

'It would not take long, with your train of servants. The invitations are the chief things to think about.'

'Lady Valence, I beg you will

proceed no further with this idea. You are only wasting your time. The ball will not be given.'

'We will see about that,' she answers coolly. 'Don't you think a fortnight's invitation will be long enough, Captain Staunton—for the country, you know?'

Lord Valence has been set at defiance. He will not argue the point further before his guests, but, rising from the table, he murmurs some indistinct words of apology, and hastily leaves the room. Everil's head is not even turned to learn the cause of his disappearance.

The rest of the company look at one another in disapproval, and are silent and uncomfortable. Two or three tears course slowly down the bridge of Miss Strong's nose and drop on to her plate. Mr. Mildmay, grunting dissatisfaction, rises and follows the Earl's example. Agatha West crosses the room to Everil's side, and stands between her and Staunton, with a hand on the shoulder of each.

'You naughty children! You have quite vexed poor Valence with your foolish talk. Don't you see that he has left the room?'

'Foolish talk, do you call it? Wait till you see my ball, Agatha. I mean it to be the best that has ever been given in Wicklow.'

'You goose! You don't really mean to give one.'

'Don't I? Come with me to my boudoir, and help me with the invitations. I shall send them all out to-day, and fix it for the second of February. That will just give the women time enough to get their dresses ready.'

'The second of February! Valence will not be well enough to attend it, will he, Everil?'

The Countess stops suddenly, and presses her hand to her heart.

'What's the matter, dear?'

'Nothing—nothing! Only a

sudden stab. Indigestion, I'm afraid. I haven't had enough exercise lately. Never mind! dancing will take it down. What were you saying, Agatha?'

'That I'm afraid dear Valence won't be strong enough for dancing, or anything of that sort.'

'Well, he won't grudge us our pleasure, I suppose, even if he can't take part in it. At any rate, he will be able to look on. Where had we better dance, Captain Staunton—in the music-room or the saloon?'

And thereupon they fall to discussing ways and means in a manner that makes Miss Strong, remembering the despairing face with which the young Earl has just quitted them, feel quite sick.

She has not yet fulfilled the promise she made to Mr. Mildmay of speaking to her old pupil about her conduct with Captain Staunton. She has lacked courage to put her good intentions into effect; but the occurrence at the breakfast-table this morning nerves her for the task.

'Everil, my dear, may I speak to you?' she says in her old deferential style, as she looks into the Countess's boudoir a few hours later, and detects her seated at a writing-table covered with note-paper and envelopes.

'To be sure, Miss Strong. Pray come in.'

The old lady closes the door carefully behind her, and advancing slowly, seats herself with a deep sigh close to Lady Valence.

'My dear girl (you will let me call you so, I know, for the sake of old times), I have a very painful task before me. I know I have lost all right to question your actions, Everil; but—but—'

'I am quite aware of what you are going to say, Miss Strong,' replies the Countess, as she begins to make inky dots all over the

paper to cover her nervousness; 'and I wish you wouldn't say it. It will be of no use.'

'Oh, my dear child, don't say that! I thought it was all so different. But you have many blessings left, Everil, even if—if—your relations with his Lordship are not all that you anticipated—and—— Don't go against him in this matter, my dear—don't give a ball since he objects to it.'

'But why should he object to it?'

'The why and the wherefore are of no consequence; that he does so should be sufficient.'

'I don't see the matter in that light.'

'I did not think you would be so headstrong, particularly at such a moment.'

'At what moment?'

'When your husband is so ill. Nay, my dear, why should you start? Does the Earl not say so himself? and cannot every one who knows him see how visibly he has retrograded lately?'

'You think so!' exclaims the Countess, as she seizes Miss Strong by the arm.

'My dear, you *must* see it for yourself. It is too palpable. He is losing flesh and strength and vigour every day. I know Dr. Newall thinks very badly of him; and Mr. Mildmay said just now that he should not be surprised if Lord Valence did not live to see this ball on which your heart appears so greatly set. Hush, hush! my love! I did not mean to distress you like this' (for the Countess has cast herself across the writing-table, and is weeping loudly). 'Pray be calm. It may be a mistake, you know. We are all in the hands of God—only, if you would consent to humour his Lordship in this little matter——'

But Lady Valence has dried her tears as suddenly as they appeared,

and is once more sitting before her desk, calm and resolute.

'You must not ask me to revoke my decision, Miss Strong. I have passed my word there shall be a ball here, and a ball there shall be. With regard to Lord Valence's health, that is, as you remarked, in higher hands than ours, and it is impossible for us to say what will or will not be. Should he continue as he is now, I am sure he will very much enjoy this little festivity; if not, we must make the best of it. I am not in the least bit angry or offended with you, my dear old friend; but if you have nothing more to say to me than this, I am rather busy just at present, and would like to be left alone.'

'And you will not listen to me, Everil?' says Miss Strong, as she rises from her seat.

'I will not give up my ball, you old tyrant, if that is what you mean—not for all your coaxing, nor for Guardy's growls; and so you may tell him. And now I shall just run you right out of my room, and lock the door upon you.'

And, suiting the action to the word, the duenna soon finds herself in the corridor again, whilst the Countess, with clenched teeth and trembling hands, turns the key in the door. She listens anxiously till Miss Strong's footsteps are heard to descend the staircase, and then she flings herself upon the sofa in an abandonment of grief.

'Oh, my heart!—my heart!' she gasps, as she holds both hands tightly clasped above it. 'Oh, God! my heart!'

She sobs distractedly for a few moments, and then begins to moan.

'Where is he? Where is my Valence? Oh! I must see him, and put an end to this horrible deception, or I shall die.'

She rises with a sudden unconquerable longing, and, all disordered as she is, with her blurred, swollen features and bloodshot eyes, rushes headlong into the passage towards her husband's dressing-room.

He is not there.

She descends the staircase to the library, and knocks.

There is no answer.

She pushes the door open and enters the apartment.

A large fire is burning in the grate; on a sofa beside it is stretched the figure of Lord Valence, inanimate, as if in sleep.

She creeps softly to his side. His white, careworn features look deathlike in repose; his wasted hands are crossed upon his breast; his sad eyes are wide open—staring—fixed upon the opposite wall.

She knows what it is now that holds him. 'This is not sleep. She has seen him under this fatal influence before. He is in a trance.

With the sight all the woman's resolutions to save him *at any cost* return.

Here lies her husband—the life of her life—chained by an invisible power that robs him of all his senses and leaves him as one dead; and here is she, living and active, and with all hers pledged to rescue him, if possible, from the thrall by which he is enchaind. In a moment the feeling of weakness that brought her to that library has passed: she is once more ready to sacrifice herself, and all that she holds most dear, for his sake; and she kneels down by his side and renews the vow.

Very tenderly she passes her arm beneath his head and places it upon her bosom; then, with her warm lips pressed to his unconscious mouth, she calls

Heaven to witness she will be faithful to her resolution.

'My love!' she whispers as she kisses his thin hands, which are locked together rigid as sculptured marble; 'my own dear love! I will die for you, or with you. And then, in that other world, for striving to look into which we shall both have paid so dearly, you will read all my motives, and my hope and my affection, and not judge me too harshly for the dubious paths by which I strove to attain my end.'

She lays his head again upon the sofa-cushion, and, rising, leaves the apartment as quietly as she entered it. On the threshold she turns and looks back upon him.

'If he only knew,' she murmurs, with streaming eyes—'but he will never know until his spirit is entirely free—*how much I love him!* I have no words in which to tell it him. I can only give him everything that I possess—even to his own esteem—and trust the means will be forgiven for the end.'

And when Lord Valence recovers his senses the library is still and empty; but from the farther end of the vast hall, where his wife and Alice Mildmay are playing battledore and shuttlecock with Maurice Staunton and John Bulwer, comes the sound of merry voices, which recalls him entirely to himself. He rises slowly, with a confused consciousness of what has befallen him, and unlocks his stiffened hands. As they touch one another he feels that they are wet, and raises them to his eyes with surprise.

Yes, he is not mistaken. His hands are wet; wet, as though with tears.

'Can spirits weep?' he thinks sadly as he regards them. 'I think not; yet, were it possible, I am a sight they might well weep over.'

At that moment another merry peal of laughter comes ringing from the hall.

Lord Valence hears it, and sighs.

'Thank God! it will soon be over,' he says, as he throws himself face downward on the sofa-cushion again. 'Thank God!—thank God!'

CHAPTER XXXIV.

'I WILL GO THROUGH WITH IT
TO THE END.'

A FORTNIGHT later, and Castle Valence is lighted up as for a great festivity. No one, to see the old place now, would think that its young master was fast dying. Yet such is the case. Lights flash from every window; the moat and drawbridge are illuminated by coloured lamps; the halls and staircases have been transformed into temporary hot-houses; the ballroom is almost as full as it can hold of diaphanous dresses and tail-coats; yet Lord Valence lies on the library sofa gasping for every breath he draws. He is in no pain; he is in no fear; he says he wants for nothing; but he lies there, growing weaker every minute, and counting the hours till the moment shall arrive to set him free. Dr. Newall has been to see him, and they have had a long and interesting conversation together; but the Doctor can do him no good, and he has gone home again, with a promise to return later in the evening. Indeed, his intention is—though this he keeps to himself—to pass the night at the Castle.

Lord Valence's personal attendant is moving noiselessly about the apartment, but his restlessness disturbs his master, and he tells him to leave the room.

'But should your Lordship require anything——'

'I can ring for you, Johnson. But I want nothing, thank you—nothing, except rest.'

'Which you would get better in bed, dear Valence, surely, than lying on the sofa.'

'Agatha! You here! What does this mean?'

'My dear Valence, do you suppose I could go and jump about at a ball whilst you are so ill? I have put on a ball dress in order to keep Everil in countenance, but I never intended to join the dancers. On this day, too, of all days in the year. What do you think I am made of?'

'It is very kind of you. It is like yourself. But what good can you do by the sacrifice? Better leave me to my silent communion with those who wait for me to accompany me hence.'

'Oh, Valence! do not speak in this manner. I cannot believe it even yet.'

'You will believe it to-morrow—at noon. All my cares and troubles will be over then. Oh, Agatha! I could die easily if it were not for one thought.'

'Which thought, dear Valence?'

'That I leave her to *him*! If he had only been some man I liked and trusted—like Bulwer, for instance—I could have borne my own disappointment bravely; but he will make her wretched, Agatha. He will break the poor girl's heart.'

'And serve her right too! No, Valence, I must speak out. Everil has behaved shamefully to you. She is not worthy of a thought.'

'Hush! you must not say that, even now! I have had a fearful blow, Agatha! I made so sure (I suppose it grew out of my own vanity and self-deception), but I made so sure she had begun to love me! She told me so, you

know; I should not have presumed to believe it, otherwise.'

'And yet Isola has always spoken the truth about her.'

'I see that now, but it was so sweet—so very sweet—to think she cared for me! For I love her, Agatha; I love her with my whole heart and soul.'

'What, *still* ?'

'Still! I should not be able to help loving her if she cursed me to my face. And she has never done that, poor child; she has never done that! She has only gone back to the old love, as you now tell me that he is.'

'On *her* authority remember, Valence. Had I known it at the time of your marriage, I should of course have told you.'

'Never mind that now. It is nearly past and done with. She has her own money, and I hope she will be happy. And for the rest, for *my* poor little fortune, that must go with the title to your child. May he prove a better and a happier Earl of Valence than I have done——'

'Oh! my dear brother,' says the widow, weeping. 'However Everil could be so base——'

'Hush! here is Bulwer! Well, old chum! have you cut the dancing too, like my good sister here, in order to sit with a dull fellow like me ?'

'I never went in much for that kind of thing, you know, Valence, and should not have joined them at all except to please Alice. Mrs. West! if you will permit me I will take your place now for a little while, and you can go and see how the ball gets on.'

'Oh! don't talk of balls to me, Mr. Bulwer. The very thought of it makes me sick. Yet, if you wish to talk to dear Valence——'

'I think it would be as well that Lady Valence had your presence, Mrs. West.'

'Yes! go to Everil,' pleads the Earl. 'She is so young, so lovely. Don't let people talk about her. There will be time enough for that afterwards—afterwards.'

'An excellent woman,' he continues as Agatha sidles out of the library; 'a good mother and a good friend. What should I have done without her, Bulwer ?'

'Humph!' ejaculates Bulwer shortly.

'I know you never liked her, but I think you have misjudged her, Bulwer. She has been faithful to me, you see, to the last.'

'Exactly so!'

'The subject does not please you. We will turn to another, Bulwer. I am so glad to have these few moments of quiet conversation. I wanted to speak to you, to ask you to befriend Lady Valence when I am gone.'

'Will she need my friendship ?'

'I am afraid so. I distrust that man.'

'What man ?'

'Maurice Staunton! Cannot you see there is a secret understanding between them? Do you not foresee what will happen when I, the obstacle to their happiness, am removed ?'

'You must be mistaken!' cries Bulwer; 'this is the madness of jealousy, Valence.'

But this remark only makes the Earl eager to prove his assertion.

'I tell you, Bulwer, it is the case. She told me long ago, poor child, that she had had a previous attachment, though she mentioned no name; and I remember now how averse she was to Staunton becoming domiciled here. But I thought it was Agatha whom he came after.'

'And how do you know now that it is not Mrs. West ?'

'I know it on her own assertion (poor Agatha! it must be a disappointment to her too, for I think

she liked the man), and from Everil's conduct. Is not her preference for him patent to the world? Has not this very ball been given at his instigation, though I am dying?'

'I certainly have observed that they are very friendly with each other, but more than that I could not believe; that is,' continues Bulwer correcting himself, 'unless I saw it with my own eyes.'

'I will show it you, then,' says the Earl, with feverish impatience, as he rises from his couch; 'we will go into the music saloon, and watch the promenaders from behind the flowers. You shall see how she can look at that man when she thinks my gaze is not upon her.'

'Valence! you are quite unfit to go through the corridors.'

'I am determined to go. Hark! They are dancing now. The way is clear! If we meet anybody it will but be thought I am on my way to my bedroom.'

He stands on his feet as he speaks, and, trembling with weakness and emotion, places one burning hand on Bulwer's arm and draws him from the library.

The music saloon juts upon the ball-room. It is filled with couches for the convenience of the tired dancers, and potted shrubs, behind one of which the men ensconce themselves in shadow.

They have not to wait there long. Even as they take their places, two figures come sauntering from the farther end, and stand together just in front of them, conversing.

'How beautiful you look to-night, my dearest,' exclaims the man. 'This is the first opportunity I have had of telling you so. You will not retract your promise, Everil? You will not fail me?'

'I will go through with it to the end,' she answers firmly.

'I was sure you would! You are not a woman to take back your plighted word. How can I thank you sufficiently?'

'Do not thank me at all—till afterwards.'

'Afterwards my whole life will be dedicated to your service. How short-sighted we are! Did we ever think things would turn out as they have done?'

'Hush! I heard a rustle near that screen; come down to the other end of the saloon.'

They move slowly away, walking a little apart, but as they gain the farther end, he places his hand familiarly upon her arm, and she—she permits it.

Valence gives a deep groan and turns away.

'Come back to the library, Bulwer, for God's sake!' he says in a faint voice of pain.

(To be continued.)





HOW THE WORLD WAGS.

APRIL, IN COUNTRY AND TOWN—THINGS THEATRICAL: SHAKESPEARE IN THE ASCENDANT—THE COMING OPERA SEASON.

SPRING'S delights are all reviving, although the poet has insinuated that 'blythe May-day' is the proper season to remark on the circumstances. April, however, can afford to dispense with this portion of the credit due to it; for surely there is no month in the year which the poets, from Chaucer downwards, have more delighted to honour. Does not brave old Geoffrey absolutely begin his work with a pæan in its praise?

'Whanne that April with his shoures
sote

The droughte of March hath perced to
the rote,

And bathed every veine in swiche
licour,

Of whiche vertue engendred is the
flour.

When Zephirus eke with his sote brethe
Enspired hath in every holt and hethe

The tendre croppes, and the yonge Sonne
Hath in the Ram his halfe cours yronne,

And smale foules maken melodie,
That slegen alle night with open eye

So priketh hem nature in her corages;
Than longen folk to gon on pilgrimages.'

And there is scarcely one of his successors who has not taken up the burden of his song, and chanted of the joys of the time

'When well-apparel'd April on the heel
Of limping Winter treads.'

Who has not found something to say about the violets? Does not Milton tell us that

'Sweet Echo, sweetest nymph that liv'st
unseen,'

selects her place of abode

'By slow Meander's margent green,
And in the violet-embroider'd vale'

Violets 'strew the green lap of the coming spring,' and are indifferently alluded to by the poet as gems instinct 'with Cytherea's

breath;' and by the huntsman as 'them stinking flowers;' which only shows how differently the same thing may strike different people.

What regulates the movements of the more prosperous portion of society? It is a singular reflection, and yet it is indubitably to a certain extent the fact, that we are driven about from country to town and back again in consequence of various arrangements made by feathered fowl and Reynard the Fox. Birds must be shot when they are ready for shooting, or, rather, when they are in condition to be made the victims of our bows and spears—that is to say, our breech-loaders; and vengeance must be wrought on the wily fox for his sad propensity for jumping over the parson's gate and committing havoc in the sacerdotal poultry-yard, when the crops will not be destroyed by a troop of galloping horsemen, and when hedges are bare of leaf, and practicable. So it befalls that laws are made for our governance, and the London season is carried through, during the heat of summer, when we should be much better in the country; and during the early spring, when those who love nature—if any one really does in these tear-away days—would find so much to charm their eyes and ears and hearts in dear familiar copses and verdant country lanes. May I return to the poets for a moment, and quote what Robert Browning thought about our April as he lingered in Italy—Browning, who does not receive half his due tribute of honour, and who has written lyrics which may take rank amongst

the most exquisite in the language?—

'Oh, to be in England
Now that April's there,
And whoever wakes in England
Sees, some morning, unaware,
That the lowest boughs and the brush-
wood sheaf
Round the elm-tree bole are in tiny
leaf,
While the chaffinch sings on the orchard
bough
In England—now!'

The second verse is too charming to leave unquoted:—

'And after April, when May follows,
And the white-throat builds, and all
the swallows!
Hark, where my blossomed pear-tree in
the hedge
Leans to the field and scatters on the
clover
Blossoms and dew-drops—at the bent
spray's edge—
That's the wise thrush; he sings each
song twice over,
Lest you should think he never could
recapture
The first fine careless rapture!
And though the fields look rough with
hoary dew,
All will be gay when noontide wakes
anew
The buttercups, the little children's
dower—
Far brighter than the gaudy indoor
flower!'

Who can explain why some songs come back to us from time to time with as much freshness as the flowers of which they speak? and why is it that what seems most simple is most delicious? Nothing, for instance, could possibly be simpler than the old song, 'When daisies pied and violets blue,' from 'Love's Labour Lost.' It is, if you come to analyse it from a prosaic point of view, a straightforward transcript of the ordinary features of an English landscape, told, moreover, in the plainest language; for, except that the flowers

'Do paint the meadows with delight,'
there is scarcely any figurative

language in the song; and yet its charm is irresistible.

It is necessary to leave the country to the blackbirds and thrushes, however, and follow the world to London. The 'pink' has been laid up in lavender; guns are reposing harmlessly in the gun-room; the partridges which have not made the acquaintance of bread-sauce can sun themselves securely, and pheasants strut from their copees into the open fields, vacant of their late enemies. The hunter is enjoying his well-earned rest, though he friaks and caracoles, when the groom takes him for a turn, as though he longed to hear again the music of the hounds; and the hack is careering mildly up and down Rotten Row, where the philosophic mind may daily find much food for reflection.

I wonder why it is that a bishop invariably rides a cob? The inferior orders of the clergy take exercise on horses similar to those of their lay brethren. Even his lordship doubtless presented himself before the world mounted on a steed of good proportions when he was a curate and [a] rector, but so soon as he succeeds to the episcopate he is never to be seen on anything much over 14-2. Here they come in an endless stream. There is his lordship who has given rise to these reflections on the subject of horseflesh in connection with the Establishment, and immediately after him, attended by a couple of well-mounted cavaliers, comes Miss X——, whom you may see any evening at the Theatre Royal, Blank, let us say. I should not imagine that her weekly wage did much to drain the treasury; and if her position on the boards were decided only by her talent it would be even smaller, seeing that

her histrionic ability is much of the same order as that of the genus *peittacus*—she learns like a parrot, or so it seems to me. Yet here she is, riding one of the best horses in the Park, and, I must do her the justice to say, riding it with a grace and courage second to scarcely any lady whom she crosses. Presently you will see her driving a pair of high-stepping ponies in a neatly turned-out phaeton; which only shows—at least I suppose so—what economy can do to make both ends meet, even round a wide circle which includes a stable full of well-tended cattle.

Here it was that Foker, on his pony, dodged about the arch of the Green Park, eagerly looking and longing for a glimpse of the sylphide Blanche Amory, who was sitting in the carriage outside 'Hunter's,' and refreshing herself with a large pink ice; and having finished it, the radiant vision quickly beamed before his eyes, and he obtained the nod of recognition for which his soul had thirsted as they crossed each other in the drive. 'What is the use of looking at a woman in a pink bonnet across a ditch? What is the earthly good to be got out of a nod of the head? Strange that men will be contented with such pleasures, or, if not contented, at least that they will be so eager in seeking them,' the wise moralist says. But so it has been since the beginning, and so it will be to the end of the chapter. A smile from her, the one true woman in the world, makes us happy for a day, a pressure of the hand for a whole week. There is no one like her.

'Nay, but you, who do not love her,
Is she not pure gold, my mistress?
Holds earth aught—speak truth—above
her?
Aught like this tress, see, and this
tress?'

So we say, but presently it seems that the gold which looked so pure is alloyed, and so daily hearts are broken—and mended.

Over in the Drive the world is busy. Carriages come clattering over the paved space around the gates, and, turning to the left, run smoothly down the familiar way towards the Serpentine, where little children under the care of short nursery-maids, who are not unfrequently escorted by tall guardsmen, are enjoying themselves. Achilles with sword and buckler stands on his pedestal in a defiant attitude, as though daring any comer to tell him of a more brilliant scene, and to exhibit handsomer girls and more stately matrons than those which are borne past him in such equipages as only England seems able to supply; drawn by horses, too, which are not to be matched elsewhere, and champ their bits, proud of taking their share in the ordinances of the London season. Some of the country coachmen are a little fussy and nervous, and form a contrast to the solemn demeanour and unflinching steadiness of their London brethren; and it is pleasant to see that in many instances the cruel bearing-reins have been taken off. In good hands no well-trained horse needs these barbarities, and if an animal cannot carry its head properly without a sharp bit to make it arch its neck, it is not suitable for a carriage. Dowagers in well-hung barouches driven by coachmen of impassive mien. City ladies in the 'carriage and pair,' who pass up and down without seeing a face that they know, enjoying the drive nevertheless because it makes something to talk about; but what circumstance justifies John Coachman in mounting that cockade? and why is it that the footman bears upon him indelible marks

of the suburbs, and differs so entirely from his Belgravian brother? This question of servants is a very singular one. A gentleman may have had servants about him, but still, somehow, they always look as if they served a gentleman; while the *parvenu* never seems able to find a decent attendant. Neat little traps drawn by pairs of spirited ponies curb in and out of the tall carriages when they get the chance, reminding one of yachts amidst a fleet of big ships; and it is a fact to be noted that in almost every case the ponies are driven by pretty women. A 'swell'—none but a slang word expresses the genus—his white gloves holding the light reins which guide a very high-stepping bay harnessed to an immaculate phaeton, drives past; and then, looking as if he hated being driven about, and wanted the hunting season to come round again, the well-known face of a stalwart Welsh baronet heaves in sight.

But why is that mounted policeman cantering along and motioning with his hand? A victoria is coming rapidly along, and a Lady in it smiles a sweet and gracious acknowledgment as all down the line hats are lifted to her with loving reverence.

'Welcome her thunders of fort and of fleet!

Welcome her thundering cheer of the street!

Welcome her all things youthful and sweet,

Scatter the blossom under her feet!

Break, happy land, into earlier flowers!

Make music, O bird, in the new-budded bowers!

Welcome her, welcome her, all that is ours!

Alas! time flies, and it is too true that twelve full years have passed since the Laureate sang greeting to the

'Sea-king's daughter, as happy as fair,
Blissful bride of a blissful heir.'

Who that could sing, indeed, did not make her a welcome? Even poor Mr. Tupper constructed a numerical rebus beginning,

'A hundred thousand welcomes,'

and continuing in the same strain in arithmetical progression until he had made what he fondly imagined was a poem, and had, to use an expression of that extraordinary bard, 'steeped in the unimperishable elixir of print' so glorious an event.

'Come to us, love us, and make us your own!'

the Laureate cried, and how nobly our Princess has done her task! Could duties be more graciously and gracefully fulfilled than are those which fall to her lot in the busy world of London? But it is not here that our Princess chiefly shines, and shows herself to be what we desired to see her, an English gentlewoman. The blessings which flow from her bounteous hand, the kind word which raises their value a hundredfold, are not known to the world at large; but there are cottage homes in England where one might hear stories told, in very simple language, which would prove what a heart our sea-king's daughter has. Even the 'World' and the 'Englishman' could find no venomous arrows to launch at such a princess as ours; and happy is that coming race which shall be ruled—may the day be far distant!—by such a noble lady.

No one seems to know what foreign royalty we are to entertain this season, and the excitement which potentates have created in bygone years has raised a sort of feeling that things are brighter with a sovereign in our midst. I think, however, that we may expect the King of Greece. Last year the Prince of the Asturias

was here, unknown and unnoticed save by few. The Prince, little dreaming of what time had in store, or rather, perhaps, not thinking that events would move so rapidly, had accepted an invitation to be the guest of a young gentleman in Scotland; but instead of the quiet life of an Aberdeenshire country house, his Majesty is governing Spain under the style and title of King Alfonso XII., which will probably be a very good thing for Spain and a great nuisance for himself. What shall be said about another prince (who is growing into a personable likeness of an Englishman), the Prince Imperial? It will be well to make the most of him while he is here; for in spite of the French Senate, the Conservative Republic, and a more or less lame healing of feuds and making of friends amongst political parties which fear and distrust one another, the Empire may be nearer than is generally suspected.

All lovers of the stage will rejoice that the vicious entertainments which lately disgraced our boards have been swept away, and that a decided taste for plays of a purer and higher character has so decidedly manifested itself; and I am glad to say that 'London Society' was one of the first publications, if indeed it was not the very first, that protested against 'actresses whose only claim to the title was that they were labelled as such in the photograph-shop windows.' Many months ago a colleague in this magazine remarked, *à propos* of the subject, 'There is a powerful amount of sterling common sense in public opinion, and it is just beginning visibly to assert itself towards the suppression of these theatrical nuisances.' Subsequent events have proved that the signs of the times were justly read.

We have always been led to believe that Shakespeare spelt ruin, but yet, wonderful to relate, he is being played at no fewer than four theatres at the time of writing, and a fifth house promises to add to the list. 'Hamlet' continues to flourish according to its deserts, and a short time ago we celebrated the hundredth night at a banquet in the theatre, when everybody was congratulated and drank the health and prosperity of everybody else, to which compliments everybody else made suitable acknowledgments. Strangest of all, however, is the fact that Mr. John Hollingshead has three theatres which are all giving Shakesperian comedy: 'A Midsummer Night's Dream,' at the Gaiety; 'As You Like It,' at the Opéra Comique; and 'The Merchant of Venice,' at the Holborn Amphitheatre.

Only a little while since the poet and his works were held in such estimation that I am told a rule was made at the Gaiety Theatre that any one who quoted Shakespeare should be fined a sum sufficient to supply liquid refreshment to the green-room; and the ingenious 'mummers' who constitute the company were wont to lay traps for their brethren by making remarks directly suggesting familiar lines, the chances being that some one present would thoughtlessly make the quotation; but all this is changed. I only wish I could say that the execution of the artists was as good as the intentions of the manager; but it is no use denying the fact that none of these plays has been efficiently presented, and, consequently, if they should not prove pecuniary successes, it will not be fair to say that 'Shakespeare does not draw.'

It is often asserted that 'A Midsummer Night's Dream' is unsuitable for theatrical performance,

but with this dictum I cannot agree; because it is probable that Shakespeare was the best judge of a play, and would not have written the idyl in dramatic form had he not intended it for the stage. Certainly, however, it requires exceptionally good acting. For a well-grown young lady to bid various members of the ballet to go—

'Some, to kill cankers in the musk-rose
buds;
Some, war with rear-mice for their leathern wings
To make my small elves coats,'

would sound ludicrous unless we were thoroughly imbued with the poetry and spirit of the scene. Puck tells us how we are to accept the play:—

'If we shadows have offended
Think but this (and all is mended),
That you have but slumbered here
While these visions did appear,
And this weak and idle theme,
No more yielding than a dream,
Gentles, do not reprehend.'

The work, indeed, requires the most exquisitely delicate treatment, and we shall probably never see it really interpreted; but it does not follow, therefore, that interpretation is impossible. A good effect was made at Sadler's Wells some years ago by placing a curtain of light green gauze between audience and actors in the fairy scenes, but this plan has not been adopted at the Gaiety.

With regard to 'As You Like It,' a notable feature is the Jacques of Mr. Hermann Vezin, who is one of the very few actors on the stage who can soliloquise. If some performers—who are evidently unaware of the fact—would look at the dictionary, they would find that a soliloquy is 'a discourse made by one in solitude to himself;' and they would find nothing to justify the supposition that it is a set speech to be re-

peated by rote. The words should flow gradually from the speaker as though they occurred to his mind only as he spoke them, and the slightest appearance of making a premeditated oration entirely spoils the effect. Mr. Irving understands this, and well indicates it, as, for example, in Hamlet's first soliloquy:

'My father's brother; but no more like
my father
Than I ——'

and he pauses for a simile: one occurs to him:

'—— to Hercules,'

he continues. You can see that the comparison strikes him as he is speaking.

So it is with Jacques' 'All the world's a stage.' The Duke—who had perhaps been reading Petronius, '*Non duco contentionis funem, dum constet inter nos, quod fere totus mundus exerceat histrioniam*'—gives him the cue:

'Thou seest, we are not all alone unhappy:
This wide and universal theatre
Presents more woeful pageants than the scene
Wherein we play;'

and then, meditating on the idea, Jacques, sitting with his back to the others, and eyes fixed upon the ground, begins:

'All the world's a stage,
And all the men and women merely
players:'

he works out his theme as he goes on, and, in fact, soliloquises. Mr. and Mrs. Kendal are intelligent and bright as Orlando and Rosalind, and Mr. Maclean proves himself to be the possessor of a fund of pathos as Adam. But when minor characters are badly played they do a great deal to spoil the efforts of the principals, especially when the principals are not nearly immaculate.

Of 'The Merchant of Venice' it is enough to say that Mr. Creswick is the best of an inefficient company. But fancy the intense excitement which the Trial scene must have evoked when the play was first acted! The bond is forfeited, Antonio's friends petition in vain for mercy, and the Jew whets that cruel, gleaming knife upon his shoe and glares at his victim, who is sadly, but withal courageously, baring his bosom 'nearest the heart.' Portia, or rather the learned doctor Balthazar, enters: it appears for a moment that there is hope, but hope soon dies. Antonio confesses the bond, and 'Then must the Jew be merciful,' is all that Balthazar seems able to say. 'On what compulsion must I? tell me that!' cries Shylock; but nobody can, and he grimly sharpens his knife while he is being told that

'The quality of mercy is not strain'd;
It droppeth as the gentle rain of heaven
Upon the place beneath.'

No: it is clearly all up with Antonio.

'To do a great right, do a little wrong,
And curb this cruel devil of his will,'

pleads Bassanio, but vainly. The Duke may not interfere, and Balthazar solemnly proclaims that

'It must not be. There is no power in
Venice
Can alter a decree established.'

Shylock is triumphant.

'A Daniel come to judgment! yea, a
Daniel!
O wise young judge, how I do honour
thee!'

Shylock can think of no term of praise too warm. Balthazar is noble, excellent, rightful, righteous, learned, and the rest. The Jew will not have a surgeon to stop Antonio's wounds lest he should bleed to death, it is not nominated in the bond, and he is

in a hurry to begin his vengeance. Balthazar sternly delivers judgment:

'A pound of that same merchant's flesh
is thine:
The court awards it, and the law doth
give it.'
'And you must cut this flesh from off
his breast:
The law allows it, and the court
awards it.'

So Shylock cries 'Prepare!' and advances.

Imagine the sensations of an audience which did not know what was about to happen. They had trusted entirely to Portia, who had planned an artful scheme; but certainly it appears that the scheme has failed. There is no way out of it. The Jew has the law on his side, and, much as every one regrets it, the decrees of Venice are like the law of the ancient Medes and Persians, which altereth not. One moment more, and Antonio will be lifeless, with Shylock's knife buried deep in his heart. But

'Tarry a moment: there is something
else,'

Balthazar says, stepping before the eager Jew, and then he proceeds to explain some points of law on which Shylock has been ill-informed.

'The bond doth give thee here no jot of
blood;
The words expressly are, a pound of
flesh:
Take then thy bond, take thou thy
pound of flesh;
But, in the cutting it, if thou dost
shed
One drop of Christian blood, thy lands
and goods
Are, by the laws of Venice, confiscate.'

It is quite certain that the very first drop of Antonio's blood he sheds will bring the most unpleasant consequences upon himself. 'Is that the law?' he asks, pausing, and not yet able to realise

the truth. And Balthazar tells him more 'about it still. If he takes more or less than a pound, even so that the scale, with which he has thoughtfully provided himself, turn but in the estimation of a hair, he must die. Nor is that all. For conspiring against a Venetian citizen his life is forfeit and his goods confiscated. Tables were never more completely turned. Shylock totters out in an agony of disappointed rage and hate.

Soon after this paper is published, the play will be given at the Prince of Wales's Theatre, and I hope it may be successful. As to the chances of its artistic success, I have a strong opinion; but no wise man should neglect the advice of the American sage, who wrote 'Never you prophecy until you know.' Some people would have us believe that Mr. Coghlan, who is to play the Jew, is the coming actor; but experience has taught me never to believe in coming actors until they have come; and it seems to me that Mr. Coghlan's utter absence of any power to express pathos or tenderness must militate against his success in most characters, though in Shylock it will not much signify.

As I am writing, I receive the prospectus of the Royal Italian Opera for the coming season, and a very welcome little pamphlet it certainly is. If there is little to satisfy the craving for novelty which seizes many people (who often don't care an atom about the novelties when they get them), it must be remembered that, as a rule, all that was attempted last season was ably done; and we can well put up with a repetition of a good deal of it. Of some of the operas announced we certainly have a right to be thoroughly

weary. I must confess, for instance, that I dread to see the curtain raised disclosing the 'salotto in casa di Violetta.' 'Libiamo, libiamo ne' lieti calici,' by all means, but let us try a little fresher vintage. 'Di Provenza il mar, il suol, chi dal cor ti cancellò?' why indeed? But if you would return and stay there for a few years, M. Germont, how much more heartily we should welcome your return! Then, again, there is all that sad business which takes place round about the Palazzo dell'Aliaferia, the residence of the Conte di Luna. 'Vedi!' cries the Count, as, dragging Azucena to the window of the dungeon, he points to Manrico (who, being a tenor, has naturally been unfortunate: operatic tenors almost invariably are, on the stage) on his way to execution. The fatal axe is raised and falls. 'È spento!' triumphantly exclaims the Count. 'È spento!' cries the gipsy. 'Egli era tuo fratello!'—the infant that all the fuss has been made about. 'Ei! quale orror! È vivo ancor,' says his lordship, and there is too much reason to fear that he will remind us of the circumstance again in a few days, and constantly afterwards.

These and some other well-worn subjects might be put upon the shelf for a few years with felicitous results to *habitués*; but who would miss some of the other old friends with whom every one is heartily familiar? What street is this to which we are taken as dawn is breaking? and who are these, the man with the lantern in his hand, the cavalier wrapped in a long cloak, and the rest? 'Piano, pianissimo, senza parlar,' they sing—of course, Fiorello and his companions, and the cavalier is none other than the Count Almaviva, though at present he chooses to call himself Lindoro. This is the

house of old Doctor Bartolo, and in it dwells his ward, the most charming little lady in the world, Mlle. Rosina Adelfina Patti. 'Ecco ridente il cielo,' chants his lordship, and the serenade is not wasted on the empty air. 'Una voce poco' makes its way to her chamber.

'Sì, Lindoro, mio sarà!
Lo giurai—la vincerò,'

she presently tells us; and, owing in a great measure to the reprehensible and scandalous behaviour of a music-master and a barber, Don Basilio and Figaro by name, the Count's boldness and address are triumphant, and Mlle. Rosina Adelfina becomes a countess.

Caterina, who lives in the village on the shores of the Gulf of Finland, is another figure we could not see too often. Her lover is one Peter, but, though he is working diligently as a ship-carpenter, and attached with all his heart to the little village—or at least, that part of it which contains pretty Caterina—there is evidently from the first a mystery about him, and a dignity in his bearing, hide it as he may try to do, which often makes him appear ill suited to his lowly fortunes.

A short time elapses. The Russian army is in the field, and a recruit, put to guard the tent of the Czar of Russia, looks through the canvas—with a curiosity which rude people would call womanish—and sees the Czar and an *aide-de-camp* flirting with two young ladies who have just been singing a ditty about two old generals who loved the same girl, and whilst they were disputing with swords and dice as to whose she should be, had the mortification of seeing her pass by to church on the arm of a gallant young captain. An officer reproves the recruit for peeping, and receives a blow for his pains; so the young soldier

is taken before the Czar and condemned to be shot; and lo and behold, the smart little grenadier is no other than Caterina, who enlisted in place of her brother so that he might be married, and who is angry because she sees her old lover Peter excited with the three delights—wine, woman and song—which are dear to every one who does not purpose to be a 'fool his whole life long,' as a very great authority once said; and Peter erstwhile the shipwright, is the great Czar of Russia!

The forty-seven works which constitute the *répertoire* of the Royal Italian Opera make an entrancing subject for the pen of a writer to whom almost each name presents a host of pleasant memories, of operas well sung in many theatres of all sorts and sizes, and in company with many pleasant people; for indeed no small portion of the enjoyment of the season springs from meetings which take place in that bright rendezvous. But inexorable space only permits a brief review of leading features. Madame Adelfina Patti then, Queen of Song *par excellence*, returns to gladden us with her thousand charms, and Mlle. Albani to show to what extent her American experiences have helped towards enabling her to realise the great promise she has given. Mlle. Marimon, whose *florituri* is well-nigh unsurpassable for brilliance and accuracy. Madame Vilda, who has some tragic power as well as a noble voice, which assiduous cultivation may have improved since last year: indeed many German critics swear by her. Mlle. D'Angeri, who has shown such excellent capacity that no one can say what the future may have in store for her: let those who would like to guess watch how she plays Selika in 'L'Africaine.' Madame Sinico, who seems to know all the

soprano music that was ever written, and sings and acts cleverly and agreeably in whatever part she undertakes. Mlle. Bianchi, a *débutante* of last year, who will surely rise to the front rank if she is careful of an unformed voice; and Mlle. Smeroschi, who is also very pleasant and satisfactory even in parts which make heavy demands upon her. Mlle. Scalchi and other efficient vocalists are also here. Signor Marini, the tenor who made a very great success last year—I thought one night the house would never have done applauding ‘*Di quella pira*’—returns, together with Signor Nicolini and other good tenors. M. Faure, the most finished artist on the lyric stage both as regards vocal and histrionic ability, will also come; and Graziani, Bagagiolo, Tagliafico and other familiar names are printed in big letters. Mlle. Zaré Thalberg, a daughter of the pianist, is to make her *début*. As to the new operas, Rossini’s ‘*Semiramide*,’ Gounod’s ‘*Romeo e Giulietta*,’ Hérold’s ‘*Le Pré aux Clercs*,’ and Wagner’s ‘*Lohengrin*,’ out of which list three are to be given, it can only be said that they will be welcome. Mlle. Albani has made a great artistic if not pecuniary success in New York as Elsa, the heroine of the last named; and persons who have been accustomed to deride the ‘*Music of the Future*’ without any acquaintance with it, will be astonished at the melody and grace of much in ‘*Lohengrin*.’

Herr Wagner could once write music, and why of late years he should have taken to the construction of uncouth and distressing noises is only known to himself. Of the Royal Italian Opera I hope to have more to say on a future occasion.

Mr. Mapleson’s prospectus is not out at the time this paper must be sent to press, but I hear that he also will give ‘*Lohengrin*’ with Madame Nilsson as Elsa. If it should please the *prima donna* to act and sing like an artist, she has the power; but whether or not it will, the experience of last year shows to be problematical. There is a chance for her to regain some of the supremacy which, I think, she has been losing for some time past, and as such powers as she showed some seasons ago are rarely found, it is to be hoped that she may consider it worth while to do her best. Another novelty at Her Majesty’s is to be Cherubini’s ‘*Medea*,’ with Fraulein Titiens in the *title rôle*. This is certain to be well done, and cannot fail to gratify cultured hearers.

I hear rumours of French companies being formed for our edification, and after the experiences of last year, when several third-rate performances failed, it is improbable that inferior troupes will venture to the London boards. But the season is young yet: as schemes mature, I hope to discuss them in these columns.

RAPIER.







Drawn by M. E. Edwards.]

AMID THE ROSES.

LONDON SOCIETY.

MAY, 1875.

ABOVE SUSPICION.

By MRS. J. H. RIDDELI.

CHAPTER XXI.

FISHING FOR INFORMATION.

ROSIE'S misbehaviour cast a gloom, so far as Mr. Wright was concerned, over the chastened festivities of Christmas Day. He did not like being the occasion for laughter to others. Many persons are similarly constituted; and though the prattle of children is doubtless a delightful music, still the Rector opined that when it played such a tune as his youngest born had elected to raise in church, it was quite possible for there to be too much of a good thing. But the next day he recovered his good spirits. He saw some of his parishioners, and they spoke of the 'dear little creature's' speech in a way calculated to soothe his ruffled feathers. Further, by the morning's post came a letter from Mr. Irwin, in answer to one Mr. Wright had posted to him a few days before, inclosing a whole half-year's payment for Bella, which amount, indeed, made up the payment for a whole year, plus the fifty pounds originally lent to the Rev. Dion.

Now, as heretofore, Mr. Wright was eating his corn before it was ripe; but, so long as evil could be staved off and present necessities provided for, little recked the Rector and his wife of the future. With fifty pounds in his

pocket, no sickness in the house, and a clear conscience, as he himself would have said, who more happy than the Rector of Fisherton—who more ready to laugh at the misadventure of Christmas Day, and remark:

'You, my dear Colonel, know nothing from experience, of these sorts of thing; but I assure you parents find them of daily occurrence.'

And then he went on to tell a case which had happened, to his own knowledge, of a child who, seated on a small stool in the drawing-room, heard her mamma remark, concerning some visitors who were driving up the avenue, 'How provoking! Here are those tiresome H——s again!' and so forth. Changing her tone, however, as the ladies entered, she said, 'Dear Mrs. H——! this is an unexpected pleasure! I am so delighted to see you!' Whereupon the *enfant terrible* interposed: 'Mamma,' she observed solemnly, 'how can you tell such untruths! It is not three minutes since you said she was a prosy, gossiping, ill-natured old woman, and that she was always calling upon people who did not wish to see her.' 'Thank you, my dear,' said Mrs. H——; 'I have heard truth

spoken for once in this house; and so, exit, with a stately courtesy. Exit also the child, a moment after, not of her own free will.

Also he spoke of another sweet darling, who, at luncheon, asked an old lady, from whom the family had great expectations, when she was going to die, as Aunt Helen wanted her diamond ring; and brought forward, in fact, many statements to prove that children have a pernicious habit of saying the right thing at the wrong time, which, if he had only been aware of the fact, was a truth concerning which Colonel Leschelles entertained no manner of doubt.

Passing from the subject of children to that of unseemly interruptions of public worship, Mr. Wright quoted some curious, though not particularly amusing, instances in point. As most of these occurred in dissenting places of worship, and in remote districts, he was led naturally to speak of the extraordinary remarks sometimes made from the pulpit in cases where the clergyman was noted for eccentricity; instancing, for example, the text Dean Swift selected when asked to preach a sermon to the tailors of Dublin, the first of which set the then gay city laughing, and the next sent his audience indignant from their seats; also the observation of a well-known minister in the North of Ireland, who, 'not wishing to be personal,' went on to say that, in a pew, sixth from the door, on the left-hand side of the aisle, there was a woman seated—a woman in a red shawl—who was laughing and otherwise misbehaving herself. All he had to say to that woman, to whom he should feel loth to direct attention, was, that if for the future she did not conduct herself properly, he would have her turned out. He was sure that slight hint would be enough,

he added, and then went on with his sermon.

But when he got to the religious utterances of some of his friends, the dissenters—good men, but imperfectly educated—Mr. Wright, who really could, when his mind was at ease, still tell a story well, made Colonel Leschelles laugh. Not with bad effect, he repeated part of a sermon he once heard delivered on 'The Prodigal Son.' 'He came, no shoes to his feet, no coat to his back, in his shirt-sleeves, and *them* grimed with dirt! his beard grown and matted, his hair uncombed and wild-like, his trousers just hanging together, all in rags and tatters, dirty with living among swine. You know what pigs are, my brethren, and they were no cleaner at that time in the Holy Land than they are in Ulster now. Well, in this plight he came back to his father's house; and his father fell on his neck and kissed him. Ugh! I wonder how he could!'

More marvellous still, however, was the prayer Mr. Wright stated to have been offered up by a staunch Presbyterian for Queen Adelaide:

'Oh, Lord! save Thy servant, our Sovereign Lady the Queen! Grant that as she grows an old woman, she may become a new man. Strengthen her with Thy blessing, that she may live a pure virgin before Thee, bringing forth sons and daughters to the glory of God; and vouchsafe her Thy blessing, that she may go forth before her people like a he-goat on the mountains!'

To these and other anecdotes of a similar description—notably to that of the old lady parishioner who, being told by her minister that the 'Lord had called him to labour in another part of the vineyard,' answered, 'And ye'll be getting better pay, no doubt; for sure am I if you had not, the

Lord might have called long enough and loud enough before ye'd have heard Him'—Colonel Leschelles would doubtless have lent a more appreciative ear, had he not been hungering and thirsting to ask some questions about Bella Miles.

At length, despairing of introducing her name naturally, he inquired: 'Is that young lady who is now staying at the Rectory a countrywoman of yours?'

'Of mine?' repeated the Rev. Dion. 'Certainly not. I should be very glad to claim her, for she is a charming girl; but that is impossible. Her coming to us was the most extraordinary thing in the world—for us, I may say, providential. Though at first I dreaded having a stranger in the house, she has been a blessing to it in every respect. It was all brought about in an extraordinary manner. Her uncle was almost unknown to us, when, one night last summer, I found myself in a serious difficulty. I won't distress your kind heart by explaining what the nature of the difficulty was. I need only say that I did not know from hour to hour whether Selina and the children might not find themselves houseless and homeless.'

'Dear me!' ejaculated the Colonel, as Mr. Wright, after this reticent statement, paused to regain composure.

'I was at my wits' end,' resumed the Rector. 'I felt I had better give up the useless struggle of trying to keep a roof over our heads. I felt beaten—and I think you know I have some fight in me still—when Providence put it into my head to ask this stranger—who had taken Sir John Giles' house while they were abroad—for help. He gave it, sir, instantly. I never before met with such delicate generosity from one

on whom I had not even the claim of acquaintanceship. He wrote me out a cheque then and there; and I was so overjoyed, that when I found myself out in the night, and all alone, I could have sobbed like a child. As for Selina, poor dear!—but I need not tell *you* all that creature had suffered.'

'No, indeed,' remarked the Colonel.

'So that is how I came to know Bella's uncle intimately,' said Mr. Wright, finishing his narrative.

As Colonel Leschelles was aware, it was the way in which the Rev. Dion had come to know a great many people intimately, so he only remarked, 'And how you came to know Miss Miles too, I presume.'

'Well, yes. At the time Mr. Irwin happened to be looking out for a suitable family in which to find a home for his niece, then at school in France; and it occurred to him that the money he meant to pay would be of use to us, and that we could be of use to his niece—and I trust we have been of use to the dear girl. Selina has taken immense pains—wonderful—in forming her; and she has improved to an extraordinary degree since she came amongst us. Her uncle is quite delighted with the change. I had a cha-ming letter from him this morning—cha-ming. I have it in my pocket. No, I must have left it at home,' added Mr. Wright, colouring a little; for he remembered it might not be prudent to exhibit Mr. Irwin's statement of accounts to his companion.

'Her uncle is wealthy, then?' said Colonel Leschelles interrogatively.

'One of the merchant princes, my dear friend,' answered Mr. Wright unctuously, which statement would considerably have astonished Mr. Irwin, had he chanced to hear it.

'Did you say he was married?' asked the Colonel.

Mr. Wright had not said so, but probably imagining he had, replied, 'Yes.'

'Is not it strange that he did not take Miss Miles to his own home?'

'Evidently,' thought Mr. Wright, 'his suspicions have taken the same turn as mine. He imagines Bella to be Mr. Irwin's daughter.' But he knew better than to let his companion see he comprehended what was passing through his mind, and answered:

'So far as I apprehend the matter, Mr. Irwin has at home a wife with a temper.'

'Poor devil!' said the Colonel compassionately.

'And I think it is very possible she might not care to have a handsome, accomplished girl distracting attention from her. Remember, this is only my idea. All I know for certain is, that she is a very rude sort of person. Why, when Selina called upon her at Riversdale she was "not at home," and never—positively never—returned the visit.'

'How singular! Then, I presume, all arrangements respecting Miss Miles are made solely with Mr. Irwin?'

'Solely with Mr. Irwin. I have never spoken to his wife, and I have only seen her driving past in her carriage.'

'Does Mr. Irwin resemble his niece? She is very peculiar-looking, you know, and must inherit her face from some one.'

'He is not like her in the least. He is fair, with blue eyes, or light grey eyes, I cannot be quite certain which—a long face, light brown hair, a high forehead, a man of an ordinary enough type—a man who impresses me, I am sure I cannot tell why, with the idea of having risen from the ranks,

and been somehow worsted on the road—a man inclined to be melancholy, and weak—yes, decidedly weak, I should say. He has nothing of the high-bred look which, no doubt, you have noticed in Bella. He does not alternate as she does, poor child!

'From grave to gay, from lively to severe.'

He is never very cheerful, and never very dull. Perhaps he "does not digest," as Sydney Smith used to suggest. The state of a man's spirits is generally governed by the state of his liver; and I attribute Bella's customary vivacity to her superb constitution. I never saw a girl enjoy such perfect health. I thought my dear children were pretty well blessed in that respect; but certainly Bella excels them there.'

'Yet she had a bad headache on Christmas Eve, and was hysterical yesterday,' objected Colonel Le-schelles.

'True; but her uncle came down, if you remember, on Christmas Eve, and evidently entertained the girl with all sorts of dismal subjects. He talked, I have no doubt, about her dead parents and his unhappy home, and other matters of the same kind.'

'Do you happen to know who her mother was?' asked the Colonel. 'Forgive me for putting so many questions; but the girl's face seems perfectly familiar to me.'

'Her mother, she says, was Mr. Irwin's sister; and, in answer to an inquiry of Mrs. Wright's, she stated that she believed she resembles her father in appearance.'

'And who was he?—what was he?—where did he live?—and where did he die?'

'I do not know. He died abroad somewhere, but where I am sure I have no idea. As to where he lived, Bella gives little informa-

tion. I suspect, however, from her knowledge of localities about that part of London, that they resided in Clerkenwell.'

'Where on earth is that?' asked the Colonel.

'Well, it lies between the Goswell Road and Farringdon Road—between Snow Hill and Pentonville. I do not think I can give you any nearer clue to its whereabouts.'

'Oh, indeed!' commented the other. 'Perhaps he carried on some trade or business there. Do you know what he was?'

'Ah! now you puzzle me altogether. "That is your own question, and you must answer it yourself," as my countryman remarked.'

'And may I inquire upon what occasion it was that your countryman made the polite observation you have quoted?' asked Colonel Leschelles, a little irritably.

'Well,' answered Mr. Wright, laughing at his friend's touchiness, 'he proposed a game, one of the conditions of which was, that if any one of the players could not answer his own question he must pay a forfeit—Pat himself leading off with the inquiry how it happened that a rabbit made her hole without casting out any earth. None of the company being able to account for the phenomenon, the Irishman explained that "she began at the other end." Whereupon some one, utterly amazed, cried out, "But how does she do that?" "Ah!" said Pat, "that is your own question; answer it yourself!" And that is precisely what I am obliged to say to you. If you can obtain from either Mr. Irwin or Miss Miles the slightest clue to the nature of Mr. Miles' occupation while on earth, where he came from, and who his father was, you will be much cleverer than your humble servant.'

Colonel Leschelles, knowing that, as regarded recondite re-

searches concerning the antecedents of any human being whose histories they wished to investigate, many talents had been given to the Rev. Dionysius Wright and Selina his wife—talents which they had not kept hidden in a napkin—made no reply to his friend's exhaustive statement. He felt, where they had failed, he was not likely to succeed, and for some reason, unintelligible then even to himself, he was very anxious to know more of Miss Miles' past and Miss Miles' progenitors than he seemed at all likely to ascertain.

'It must be a little unpleasant for you,' he said at length, referring to the fact of having such a mystery boarding, lodging, washing, and lodging at the Rectory.

'I do not feel any unpleasantness now, I assure you,' said Mr. Wright, cheerfully beating a tattoo on the front of his top-coat, inside of which lay, crisp and snug, Mr. Irwin's letter and his welcome cheque. 'You see, she is such a dear, good creature; and one hundred a year is one hundred a year, to a man with twelve children, an appearance to keep up, and a position to maintain.'

'The uncle pays you a hundred per annum, then?' interrogated Colonel Leschelles.

'That was his own offer, and I need not say I did not urge him to reduce it,' said the Rector.

'No; I suppose not,' said his companion, looking with his outward eyes up and down the flat, marshy, uninteresting valley of the Thames, as it presents itself to the beholder at Fisherton—vainly searching mentally for some small fish to attach itself to his hook—and finally coming to the conclusion that no fish, whether great or little, was to be landed by means of any bait he could present.

CHAPTER XXII.

COLONEL LESCHELLES MAKES A
DISCOVERY.

THERE is an uncertainty about fishing. It is curious to consider how one's experience varies according to the locality in which one resides.

At a remote period of my life, I should have said positively that, given any decent sort of weather, a fisher need never have returned from a fishing expedition empty; but in that case, he had to seek his prey in the sea.

Recently, I knew it is very possible for a man to spend hours—days—weeks—months in this enticing occupation, and catch nothing. Not far from where these lines are being written, there is a bridge, described in the local guide-books as being of stone, and very handsome; and indeed it is a graceful and substantial structure. It spans a river, part of which is dear to anglers; and from it a near view is to be obtained of a pretty village and a church.

On that bridge there stands perpetually a man fishing. No one has ever known him to bring anything from the lower depths up to his own level, though it has been rumoured that he was once heard informing a friend of some special good fortune, in which a jack of five pounds weight played a conspicuous part.

Which brings me back to my own sheep. Not a stone's throw—a child's stone-throw, I mean—from our accustomed sitting-room, there is another bridge, over a stream.

The stream is neither very wide nor very deep; and the bridge is consequently not handsome, or built of stone.

Nevertheless, it is very pretty.

It is covered and festooned with ivy; and on a favourable day, when one stands upon it looking down into the wider water lying riverwards, one can see plenty of fine fish making circles and ripples, and then disappear, to re-appear, a few minutes after, a little farther off.

In this water, which would seem to present a fair prospect to an angler, a certain youth undertook to lure, with cunning hand, perch, dace, jack and roach to land.

He fished and he fished. He began early in the morning. He was still hopeful at mid-day. He stood calmly expectant on the bank in the afternoon, and evening found him unwearied with his ill-success.

For indeed he never caught any creature worth calling a fish—since it is not easy to cook a piscine baby about a day old, and consisting of a head and tail and no body. Of these useless innocents he would have made a collection in a large water-butt, had they not been summarily turned back into the stream; but the wiser and older fish refused to listen to his wooing.

Nevertheless he persevered. He tried all baits and all hooks, and had perfect faith, if he failed to-day, he must have a full basket to-morrow.

In especial he pinned his hopes on a certain jack, which he represented as residing amongst the weeds and eating its smaller neighbours. According to his statement, this jack was a creature of enormous size—a sort of Daniel Lambert amongst pike; and he never lost his bait, nor had his hook carried off, but he declared the jack had been at his line again.

Had his statement been correct, that pike would have been as full

of hooks as a Christmas pudding is of plums.

Once a girl, curious to know what really was at the end of his line, picked up the rod he had laid on the bank, and found an unfortunate perch, about two inches long, well hooked. Releasing it, she threw the foolish creature back into the water; and when the angler returned, he solemnly declared, 'That jack has been at his old tricks again!' On another occasion, the whole household was solemnly asked to assemble and see the landing of the big pike.

'I've got him at last!' said the angler, hauling away with eager hands. 'There!—there!—don't you see him now?'

Some of the spectators were polite enough to say they saw the prey, and others were truthful enough to say they saw nothing of the kind. Nevertheless every one believed the pike's hour had come, as the line was drawn slowly in—slowly and carefully, with a great bunch of weeds.

After this it was necessary to speak plainly, and say, as it was impossible to live upon the faith of a supposititious jack, some fish must be caught—caught, too, by a particular day.

The day came, and though three animals, which might have looked well through a microscope, were brought in, no human being out of a lunatic asylum could have thought of cooking them; and the domestic atmosphere was clouded when there came, from a non-preserved part of the stream, observe, where Dick, Tom, and Harry are free to spend their Sunday mornings, and all the other many idle hours Satan allows them for recreation, a basket full of the finest fresh-water fish eye could desire to see.

It is a melancholy fact that

successful angling, like kissing, goes by favour.

You may woo the stream patiently, skilfully, perseveringly; you may be constant in season and out of season, and not get enough in return to pay for your tackle, and then there comes along some careless stranger, who casts his line at random, or some impudent, ragged young varlet, armed only with a crooked pin and a piece of twine, and you shall see him carry off the prize your soul has longed for; the ewe-lamb out of the water you had almost come to consider your own.

Which brings me to the moral I desire to draw. People who go fishing on land often find themselves much in the same condition as those who go angling in streams and rivers. They bait with likely questions—they choose their time, place, and opportunity, and the result is generally *nil*; and then suddenly, when they had no thought of getting what they want, their fish is hauled to land, and lies on the bank beside them, waiting for the fatal blow.

Colonel Leschelles proved the truthfulness of this theory. He angled with a light line and delicate flies in the uncertain waters of Mrs. Wright's nature, and the only treasure he produced from those depths and shallows was, that Mrs. Wright did not like Bella Miles.

'I am very sorry for her, of course, poor child, and I would do her any service in my power; but for me to love, it is necessary I should understand, and I confess I do not understand Bella—I wish I did.'

'The uncle might have saved *his* money,' thought Colonel Leschelles. 'The niece's investment will, I think, turn out better.'

Then he tried Miss Miles, by asking her leading questions and endeavouring to surprise her, and

came out of the encounter a defeated man. Miss Miles was prepared at all points. There was nothing to be got out of her.

Ere long also he had an opportunity of making Mr. Irwin's acquaintance; but Mr. Irwin proved a greater mystery than his niece. He traced back his career to the earliest period, only to find nothing in it beyond the common, unless, indeed, it might be that the man's cleverness had somehow compassed success.

Of his antecedents Mr. Irwin made no secret. He and his sister, being early left orphans, were obliged to shift for themselves, and did so, she as nursery governess in the house of a relative, he as apprentice, clerk, manager to a firm of die-sinkers in Soho, where he remained till he went to America.

His sister met her husband at the house where she was governess. He took a fancy to her, and she to him, and they were married. That was the true and straightforward story, my dear friends, you will perceive, such as is told us every day by some one. Not a word in it which could not have been verified on oath, and yet conveying a series of false impressions to the mind of the hearer.

Only one more piece of information did Colonel Leschelles essay to obtain, and he obtained it in this wise.

'Mr. Miles was a doctor, was he not?'

'Oh dear, no!' answered Mr. Irwin. 'He was a jack-of-all-trades.'

'And ——,' suggested the Colonel.

'Master of all,' was the reply; 'or at least, pretty nearly so. A clever man—so clever a man that I think he might have done anything he chose, had he only made up his mind to a certain course,

and followed it. Veering and changing about were his ruin.'

'Ah!' said the Colonel, and, fairly beaten, dropped the subject.

'What a stupid creature the world makes a fellow,' he thought. 'Here am I, who ought to know better, suspecting a mystery where evidently none exists. The father was a "ne'er-do-weel," doubtless, and perhaps came from some poor, wicked, half-mad old stock, which accounts for Miss Bella's beauty, talent, and eccentricity. Besides, why should I try to unravel the antecedents of this uncle and niece? What are they to me?'

Which would have been a prudent question once, but was now incapable of receiving a suitable answer; for the Colonel was in love with this girl, and pulses which for years had throbbed slowly and regularly, beat rapidly when she entered the room where he sat, or walked beside him along those dull, endless, muddy Fisherton roads. For which reason—seeing she was in her teens, and he, Heaven only knew how near threescore and ten—he would thankfully have received the news that she was illegitimate, or that her father had been hung, or her mother divorced.

All he wanted was Bella; and he dimly grasped the truth that, unless there was something very questionable about Bella's antecedents, about the life-story of her father and mother, he might want that young lady for a very long time.

Not twenty, exceedingly beautiful, amiable, accomplished, owning one rich relation at all events, it was not in the slightest degree likely she would cast a favourable eye on a man capable of being her great-grandfather; and yet—and yet the Colonel had his ideas and his hopes, and so went fishing from day to day. And still he landed

nothing; and it was in a moment of utter despair that chance gave him the clue after which he had so long been searching.

'His dears,' as Mr. Wright complaisantly called his children, had all been bidden to a Twelfth-night party. They were well goloshed and warmly wrapped up to walk to the entertainment, attended by Mr. Wright; and that gentleman had rushed out of the dining-room to see that his general attire was as scrupulously perfect and utterly clerical as usual, when Bella Miles entered the apartment and walked up to the table without perceiving that the Colonel sat in shadow beside the fire, which was burning low.

'Oh!' she said, when she did see him; 'I beg your pardon. I did not know you were here.'

Whereupon he laughed, and asked if he were such an ogre that his presence should prevent her entering any room in which he happened to be.

He had never before seen her look so handsome or so remarkable. Her white dress, knotted up with black ribbons, for she wore slight mourning out of respect to Mr. Irwin's memory; her round arms clasped by jet bracelets, lent for the occasion by Mrs. Wright; her shoulders covered by a red opera cloak, trimmed with white fur, the hood of which, drawn close about her face, enriched it with a setting of soft, snow-like down. As she stooped a little forward, the hood fell back from her head; and with a sudden exclamation, Colonel Leschelles rose astonished, and said:

'Why, it is Molly Barthorne whom you so much resemble! Standing as you do now, I could fancy she herself had stepped down from her frame.'

And then he stopped, for the

flowers had dropped from Bella's fingers, and she was looking at him with dilated, frightened eyes.

'What is the matter?' he asked anxiously. 'Are you ill?' And he hurriedly poured out first some water, and then some wine.

'No,' she said, rejecting both; 'I am not ill, thank you. Who is Molly Barthorne? Where does she live?'

'She does not live anywhere now,' he answered. 'She was a celebrated court beauty once upon a time, however; and you might be her sister, so great is the likeness between you.'

'Oh! don't,' entreated Bella, 'don't say so to anybody but me! Colonel Leschelles, don't be vexed with me, please; but may I trust you never to mention this to any one else? I cannot tell you why I ask; but will you do me this kindness?'

She held her hands out to him appealingly, and he took them, as he answered:

'My dear, you might trust me with your life. I would do anything on earth for you. A word of this shall never pass my lips. Now, gather up your flowers and go; Mr. Wright is calling you.'

Which, indeed, was true. At the top of his voice Mr. Wright was saying, 'Bella! Bella! Bella! Where are you? We are all ready; don't keep us waiting the whole evening.'

'Here I am,' said Bella, coming out of the dining-room, and interrupting the pastoral Mr. Wright, imagining her to be upstairs, was delivering from the bottom of the flight. I did not know you were ready. I was only getting a few flowers.'

And drawing her hood over her head, she stepped out into the darkness, that Mr. Wright might not see her face.

(To be continued.)

NOTES ON POPULAR DRAMATISTS.

IV.—MR. JOHN OXFORD.

THE history of the dramatists of to-day is a history of neglected opportunities. We have playwrights now living amongst us who are capable of doing work that would live; but how many dramas produced of late years will be upon the stage a hundred years hence? Mr. Byron is, there seems too much reason to fear, irreclaimably careless. What he has given us since comment was made upon him in this Magazine fully bears out what was then said: the two comedies, 'Old Sailors' and 'Our Boys,' are wonderfully witty; the keen and quiet humour of his dialogue is as excellent as ever; but his personages have no regard for the consistency of their actions, and, as was remarked of them in a journal a short time ago, act from no other motive than a desire to enable their author to work out his immature scheme. Some other dramatists, as we have seen, diligently refuse to do justice to their powers; and Mr. Oxford has assuredly never done justice to his.

That Mr. Oxford has written much that is admirable in the forty years during which his pen has been almost constantly devoted to the stage, is of course known to every student of the drama: of all his varied works there is scarcely one that can be called bad, and there are very few which have not much excellence to recommend them. But he is a man of very exceptional abilities and great attainments; he, perhaps more than any living dramatist, has power to sway the sterner passions which animate the mind;

he has a thorough appreciation of dramatic effect, and, had he chosen, might have produced original dramas of literary merit, as well as of value for stage purposes. Instead of this he has, at any rate in a very great majority of cases, frittered away his talent upon trifles of ephemeral interest—'Twice Killed,' 'Only a Half-penny,' 'No Followers,' and many other farces; very good farces in their way, perhaps, but not rising above similar work from his contemporaries; upon *libretti* for operas now never to be seen; upon translations and adaptations from the French and German, and upon a variety of matters which have had their little day, and then passed for ever into the limbo of obscurity.

It has seemed necessary to make this complaint, because Mr. Oxford might have done much to introduce a hearty dramatic literature of home growth, and do away with the reproach that our theatres are almost entirely dependent on Paris; and, indeed, when we see the Haymarket, our chief comedy theatre, giving three pieces of French origin, it is not the time to let the cry, stale as it is, die out. At the moment of writing this paper, the Haymarket Theatre, which has given birth to so many sterling English comedies, is occupied with 'A Fair Encounter,' an adaptation of Gasteneau's vaudeville, 'Les Souliers de Bal'; with 'Home,' Mr. T. W. Robertson's version of Emile Augier's 'L'Aventurière'; and with 'The Serious Family,' 'Un Mari à la Campagne'; and this is not as it should be.

But although Mr. Oxenford has not used his powers to anything like the best advantage, he has, as we have said, done much careful work. It is probable that the number of his contributions to the stage has reached three figures; and playgoers would be under an obligation to him if he had written nothing but 'The Porter's Knot.' Granted that this admirable little drama is another adaptation—and, in some respects, a tolerably close adaptation—from the French, the author has given it a perfect colouring of English life. Samson Burr is nothing like a Frenchman, but precisely and exactly what he is represented as being, a hard-working and honest Kentish man; while Mrs. Burr and Alice are British to the backbone. The subject is of the humblest; but it would be difficult to name a more delightful little story, or one in which tears and laughter are more happily blended, than the short and simple annals of the good old porter's sorrows and joys. So long as hearts beat in sympathy with love and patient resignation, so long will this homely story be welcome.

It is possible that some readers may not know, or may have forgotten, the tale to whose hero Robson's genius gave life, for some sixteen years have passed since the play was produced, and since Robson's death it has seldom been revived, in consequence of a feeling on the part of character-actors which it is easy to understand.

Old Samson Burr is a porter who has pinched and scraped during many years of a laborious life to educate his son as a doctor. Young Burr studies, and obtains his diploma; and the pride of the old man finds vent in extravagances which would be ludicrous, were his honest delight not so heartfelt and sincere; nor are his

mother and cousin Alice—who is to marry him—less proud and happy at the young doctor's success. But their happiness is short-lived. One Stephen Scatter, a 'friend' of young Burr, makes his appearance at the old man's snug little cottage, and does not inspire confidence; and his visit is followed by one from Mr. Smoothly Smirk, a money-lender. From him the poor old man learns the truth. His son, instead of being the prudent lad his father supposed, has been living with reckless extravagance, and has contracted debts to the amount of two thousand pounds. At first Burr is enraged, and refuses to believe the story, and vows that not a penny of the money he has scraped together shall find its way into the pockets of 'a pettifogging scoundrel.' Smirk shows some slight resentment at the term. 'My dear sir,' he answers, 'that expression is, to say the least of it, offensive.' 'Not half so offensive as asking me for two thousand pounds. But I won't pay it; if I do I'll ——' Here Smirk interposes. The father is not bound to pay his son's debts, and the call has only been made out of civility, in case Mr. Burr should dislike to see the boy arrested. 'Arrested!' the old man cries out; 'Gussy arrested! Pray, sir, speak lower. If his poor mother were to hear you—'

'SMIRK. What! do you appeal to the feelings of a pettifogging scoundrel?'

SAMSON. Oh, sir! I am a plain man—an uneducated man—I have not learned to pick and choose my expressions when my temper is upset.

SMIRK. Then, sir, as you call "scoundrel" the man who merely comes for his own money, what pretty word would you bestow on the man who borrows money without the slightest chance of repaying it at all?

SAMSON. Oh, I don't know—I don't know!

SMIRK. Well, then, I will tell you the

expression that will be used by people in general. They will say, that although Mr. Burr, senior, is an honest man, Mr. Burr, junior, is a—swindler!

SAMSON (*enraged*). Take care what you—(*suddenly checked*). No, he's right, Gussy is a— Ugh! I could send my fist into his malicious face—but he's right—he's right. (*Humbly*) Sir, pray don't use any more hard words. There is a poor woman in the house who would break her heart if she were to hear you; and my heart might be broken too, but I don't so much mind that. (*Sits, R. C.*)

SMIRK. My dear sir, I'm the best natured creature in the world—I don't want to break anybody's heart—I only want my money, that's all—I wouldn't hurt a fly if it paid me what it owed.

SAMSON. Oh, Gussy! Gussy! the work of forty years! and you have destroyed it all!

Above all things, distress must be softened for the loving mother and faithful wife, and the heavy burden of disappointment must be borne on the brave old man's own shoulders. But Gussy must not stay amongst the shattered household gods; and it is well that he should do something to expiate his fault. Captain Oakum, a merchant trader, is coming to take his last dinner ashore, before a long voyage to Australia, with his old friend Samson, and to him is recounted a long story of a foolish old man—Tom Plummer—who must needs dabble in speculations—railways, mines and banks—and who wakes up one fine morning without a farthing in his pocket, to find that his old age must be one of labour and sorrow. He has a son, this foolish old Tom Plummer, who is seeking any employment that would bring him an honest living. Will Oakum take the youngster aboard his ship? He presently consents; and by degrees young Burr is made to understand that the truth is known, and that his father and he stand for Plummer and the son. The boy embraces his fate, and starts off with Oakum, and as soon as he has gone Samson ex-

pounds his parable. The fool who speculated and lost all is himself. No hint is given of Gussy's fault. The mother is to have the consolation of thinking her son honest and bright. All the blame—the reproaches, if any, are to be spoken—the old man will meekly bear to shield his boy. He looks up at the old porter's knot which hangs behind the cottage-door. 'With that I began,' he says; 'to that I return.' And then the gun fires to announce that Oakum's ship has weighed anchor.

A year passes, and we are taken to another part of the Kentish seaport. Here is Stephen Scatter—who has not drowned himself, as he proposed to do—attired as a railway inspector: and hither comes Samson, wheeling a heavy load on his truck. Scatter is not the man he was, and has indeed blossomed into a very good fellow, whose greatest ambition is to shake hands with the honest old porter whom he has been instrumental in ruining. He looks at Samson 'as wistfully as a stray puppy,' and is presently gratified with a grip of the desired hand. Samson has been watching him closely for some time past, and does not hesitate to say that he respected the quondam rake. 'The respect of an old fellow who wheels about other people's boxes, when he ought to be wheeled about himself, mayn't be worth much, but such as it is, take it, and welcome;' and Scatter vows that he would not exchange it for a hundred pounds. The manner in which Samson endeavours to demonstrate the advantages of poverty is a very great deal too good to be passed over. He sits on his truck waiting for his dinner, which is soon brought to him by his wife.

'SAMSON. Ah, Milly, old lady, I'm delighted to see you, especially as you have

brought the soup (*taking out jug and beginning to eat*). Let me see—yes, that's as I like it—plenty of meat. Capital! This is a repast worthy of my appetite, which is no small compliment.

MRS. B. (R.) Ah, my poor dear, I am afraid you are killing yourself.

SAMSON. (*eating*) On the contrary, I'm keeping myself very comfortably alive. I regard myself, at this moment, as one of the cosiest of mankind. Delicious!

MRS. B. Ah, poor dear, you need something nourishing with all your hard work. It's too much for you, it is, indeed. We had still enough to sit quietly at home for the few years we have to live.

SAMSON. Yes, but don't you see, unluckily, one sometimes lives beyond one's time—outlives one's money, and then one's obliged to retire to the Union Workhouse—a noble institution, but by no means pleasant. Besides, after all, I like the old trade. I was a happy old man in my arm-chair; but hang it, when I sit on my truck I feel young again, and I think, and I think—what do you think I think, Milly?

MRS. B. I'm sure I can't tell.

SAMSON. Why, I think how, twenty years ago, you used to come with the basket to bring me my dinner, just as you do now.

MRS. B. Yes, and to this very spot.

SAMSON. So it was—and we used to sit side by side.

MRS. B. Just as we do now.

SAMSON. Yes, and we were dressed pretty much in the same fashion.

MRS. B. And we were just as poor as we are now.

SAMSON. Almost.

MRS. B. And we talked about our love for one another.

SAMSON. (*affectionately to MRS. BURR*) As we can now.

MRS. B. And we talked about our savings.

SAMSON. Of which, at present, the less we say the better. And then, and then, we talked of our son.

MRS. B. And we hoped that Heaven would preserve him for us.

SAMSON. True, just as we now hope (*raising his hat*) that Heaven will send him back. (*Suddenly changing in his manner*) Why, taking all things together, it's as good as being twenty years younger. Upon my word, losing every farthing one has in the world is not without its advantages.

They have heard of Gussy's safe arrival in Australia; but that was some six months ago, and

they are all growing exceedingly eager for news about him. Samson's first thought is, of course, to soothe the mother's anxiety; and so he enters into a plot with Alice, who is now adding to the scanty store by giving music lessons. This plot is to write a letter, as coming from Gussy; and just as Samson has finished and expounded the new philosophy of contentment, Alice appears with the missive in her hand, and proclaims herself the bearer of good news.

'ALICE. As I was returning from my lessons I met—I met—'

SAMSON. (*significantly*) The postman! ha!

ALICE. Exactly! the postman who—

SAMSON. Who gave you a letter—that's what postmen frequently do.

ALICE. Yes, but who wrote the letter, dear aunt?

MRS. B. I'm sure I can't guess.

SAMSON. (*aside*) Ah, that I'll be hanged if you can.

ALICE. It's from—from—dear Gussy! (*Snatches letter from Alice, and opens it hurriedly. SAMSON affects surprise.*)

MRS. B. No! I can't make it out. I can read print, but I'm a poor hand at writing.

SAMSON. You read it, Alice, (*whispers*) and mind you do justice to my style.

ALICE. (*reads*) "My dear parents, this comes hoping to find you well, as, thank Heaven, it leaves me at present."

MRS. B. The dear boy! That's the way a letter ought to begin, though I don't think he used to write in that way from London.

ALICE. (*whispers to Samson*) You know what I told you, uncle, you would—

SAMSON. (*whispers*) Pooh! it's all right!

ALICE. "I'm working hard, and I'm making lots of money, which you will be glad to hear."

SAMSON. It's a pretty worded thing, isn't it?

MRS. B. Does he say anything of his return?

SAMSON. Oh, yes! you have not come to that—

ALICE. (*whispers*) Uncle!

SAMSON. Ahem! I mean—ne's sure to say something about that as a matter of course.

ALICE. (*reads*) "The time for my departure is not fixed."

SAMSON. (*aside*) Unfortunately we couldn't fix it better under the circumstances.

ALICE. (*reads*) "Best love to Alice, and no more at present from your affectionate son, Augustus."

MRS. B. And that's all?

SAMSON. Of course; doesn't the lad say "no more at present"? Quite enough too! Ah! when we read a letter like that we need not regret the money we laid out on Gussy's education.

ALICE. But, uncle, there is a postscript, after all. Look here.

SAMSON. Eh! so there is! (*Aside*) That has grown since the morning.

ALICE. Suppose you read it, uncle.

MRS. B. Yes, do, Samson.

SAMSON. (*reads*) "As winter is coming on" (*aside*) Egad I know nothing about this! "As winter is coming on, you will probably stand in need of many little comforts." (*aside*) This is all news to me! "I have, therefore, inclosed you a ten-pound bank note"! which is here! (*producing note from inside of letter.*)

MRS. B. A ten-pound bank note!

SAMSON. (*aside*) The dear girl's own savings! What, (*aloud*) a ten-pound note, what do we want with his ten-pound notes? I won't have it! I'll send it back!

ALICE. Not take the money sent by your own son!

SAMSON. Bless you, my child!

The little incident of the ten-pound note, so cunningly provided by Alice, proves her to be worthy of her uncle.

Space forbids further quotation. Of course Gussy returns after performing glorious actions; and his employers, whose credit he has saved, take him into partnership. The secret of his early days is strictly kept. Alice joyfully accepts his hand, and Samson goes to church to see them married, in his porter's knot. And so ends one of the purest and most ennobling little dramas the stage has ever seen.

As has been said, much of 'The Porter's Knot' follows the original 'Les Crochets du Père Martin' with fidelity. But stage adaptation is a very much more difficult

task than those who have not tried it would suppose; and Mr. Oxenford has shown himself to be a master of the art. At once he catches the spirit of his original, or decides how far it will be advisable to depart from it. Having made his determination, the work is consistently carried through, and always marked with the impress of his own keen mind. This he proved well-nigh thirty years ago in his version of 'Adrienne Lecouvreur.' Some time ago he was called upon to adapt Lord Lytton's novel, 'The Last Days of Pompeii,' and such dialogue as he was forced to introduce fitted smoothly and with no evidence of the juncture into that of the novelist. (As a matter of detail, the play was unsuccessful; but this was not the fault of Mr. Oxenford, who treated matters unsuitable for stage representation as well as they could be treated.) A play was wanted to show Mr. Sothorn in an eccentric character, and Mr. Oxenford's wide knowledge of contemporary dramatic literature suggested a whimsical piece by Herr Görner, who was then—and may, perhaps, be still—manager of the Court Theatre at Mecklenburg-Strelitz, and the farcical comedy of 'Brother Sam' was evolved from it, the Oxenford element predominating very decidedly over the Görner; indeed, the latter may be said to have supplied nothing beyond bare suggestions, which our author has clothed.

But want of ambition or of energy—for, despite the very long list of plays for which he is responsible, scarcely one of them can have seriously taxed his brains—has prevented Mr. Oxenford from achieving the reputation which, there can be no doubt, was within his reach. On Mr. Lacy's walls, on undisturbed

shelves of the British Museum, in dusty corners of property-rooms, and at the bottom of actors' trunks, will lie neglected the result of one who might have made for himself a name amongst English dramatists. Now, it is to be feared, it is too late; and this is to be the more regretted, because, notwithstanding all he has written for the stage, freshness and nature are still prominent in his work. This was shown by a late failure. Some few years ago the Opéra Comique opened with a comedy from his hand. Most dramatists in the course of time learn tricks by which 'situations' can be made, and place much dependence upon them. Mr. Oxenford had chosen (unwisely) a story which did not admit of this species of effect, and, treating his theme naturally and without strain, made a very weak play. This, of course, he saw at rehearsal, and one day asked the stage manager how he liked it. 'Well, since you ask me, I think it's an abominably bad play,' that candid gentleman replied; and the author responded, 'I quite agree with you.' So it was, from one point of view; and it may be argued that an author of forty years' experience ought not to write plays which are palpably ineffective; but there is something to be said for a writer who, having chosen his subject, treats it artistically to the limit of its capacities, and refuses to strain it for the sake of theatrical effect.

It is impossible to close a notice of Mr. Oxenford without commenting on his behaviour in the position in which he has laboured for so many years. Surely no journalistic secret is betrayed in saying that for something like a quarter of a century Mr. Oxenford

has been the dramatic critic of the 'Times,' and the paper could not have had a more efficient representative in this walk of art. No writer on theatrical matters has a wider knowledge of the drama at home and abroad, a more truly critical observation, or an easier and more graceful method of recording his impressions. Against his especial aptitude for this particular description of work no competent judge has ever said a word: but here undiluted commendation ceases; indeed, he is much to blame for many evils which have fallen on the stage of late years. He has been weakly good-natured and generous at the expense of art. A few sentences of cutting sarcasm in the 'Times'—and no one could have administered the lash with more effect—would have repressed the development of that species of so-called *opéra-bouffe* which became a scandal to the stage; and had he been more vigorous in the condemnation of what was clearly bad and unworthy, what was better and purer must inevitably have followed; for the 'Times' is a power in the State. Nevertheless, no one who knows Mr. Oxenford will for one single moment suppose that his association with actors and managers in his capacity of author has to the faintest extent influenced his opinion. The weakness of his adverse criticism has doubtless arisen from the kindness of his heart, and from a dislike to giving pain; and, as we have seen, the result has not been favourable to the interests of the drama.

And so we take leave of one who has done much for the stage, but not so much as he might have done.

PEYTON WREY.

JENKINS OVER THE WATER.

WHEN the United States of America were so new as a nation that writers of travels had but just begun to find them out, the late Lord Lytton—alluding to a remark of Captain Basil Hall's—described the country as one 'where boots are imperfectly polished, but opinions are free.' As opinions could not well be more free than they were, there has been no room for progress in that particular; but in the matter of polish—of boots we may suppose, and of manners most certainly—there has been wonderful improvement. The Americans were always notable for that small-change of benevolence which takes the form of social courtesy. They invented, it may be said, the idea of giving *place aux dames* in public conveyances, theatres, and elsewhere; and in these respects the old world is still behind the new.

And as they began to make more money than they knew what to do with, they also learned the noble art of spending it, without which money is about as useless a commodity as can be conceived. To the natural refinements of life they soon added the artificial, exhausting worlds of luxury they then imagined new; and failing in material forms, they found fresh modes. Thus it is that in the great cities of America the Goddess of Fashion is worshipped more than in any capital of Europe. Receiving the immediate impetus from Paris ('where good Americans go to when they die') New York in particular has out-Paris-ed Paris in setting up conventional standards of dress, dining, dancing, visiting, riding, driving, walking, talking, doing everything in fact, or doing nothing at all.

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Let me read the newspapers of a nation, and I will tell you what the nation is. The proposition is far more practical than that of governing a country through its songs. It is from the current journalism of the country that I gain my idea of American society, which, in a state of entire freedom, has found for itself so curious a code of restraints and observances. And, be it remarked, that the code is not altogether adopted from Europe; it is racy of the soil, breathes of the free air, and is thoroughly democratic in the spirit by which it is pervaded.

A peculiarity observable at the first glance is that, whereas only a few avowedly 'fashionable' papers among us occupy themselves with fashionable matters, you can scarcely find a journal in the principal cities of America which does not devote to them a considerable portion of its space; while in personal details they go far beyond the limits prescribed by our Court journals and those curious publications which may be called millinery magazines. There is an American journal before me. Among its most prominent articles is one of nearly two columns in length—in the form of a letter from New York. It has, as usual, several headings, embodying a brief synopsis of the subject-matter. Thus: 'NEW YEAR'S DAY THREATENED WITH EXTINCTION—PAST AND PRESENT ETIQUETTE—YOUNG LADIES AT HOME AND IN SOCIETY—TOILETTES.' The writer sets out with a lament, worthy of Thackeray's Jenkins (writers on such subjects, by-the-way, do not always respect the democratic idea), that inferior people make use of charity balls in order to get into good society, if only on its

threshold; and he adds that they are happy to receive a nod or smile from the 'Lady Patronesses,' though they may not be permitted to meet those illustrious persons in private. 'Mrs. Jonathan Blue-blood,' 'Mrs. David Sauerkraut,' and the rest of these *grandes dames*, we are told, are considered as part of the show; and they have of late years 'accepted the situation to the extent of forming in line and opening the festivity with a march in procession round the floor of the Academy of Music. They are always accompanied with very high-bred daughters and nieces, who remain in the seclusion of boxes with male friends until the proper time arrives, and then descend to the floor, perform languidly the proper number of duty dances, and retire again to their boxes to examine and criticise through their pearl opera-glasses the 'over-dressed crowd who have come to puff and pant, and surge and swell, and drag after them enormously long trains for their amusement.'

After this we come to an anticipatory account of a grand fancy ball to be given at a private house, with a description of the rooms and some of the ladies' dresses, called respectively 'Forget-me-not,' 'Twilight,' 'Ceres,' 'Bo-peep,' 'the Haymaker,' and 'Charlotte Corday.' The latter, we are told, 'is trying from its severe plainness, but a very charming girl is determined to wear it.' By way of relief from this severe propriety, we are next informed of a projected 'Pop-corn and Kissing Party,' at which over-skirts are not admitted, and bib-aprons will be required. 'A coloured fiddler will furnish the music. All the old games are being hunted up, and are to be revived under the auspices of a well-known philosopher and scientist.' The refreshments are to consist of

'crullers, dough-nuts, mince pies, and all those horrible indigestibles which come under the head of "good old-fashioned fare."' Among the games mentioned are 'Blind Man's Buff,' 'Hunt the Slipper,' and 'Twirl the Trencher.' The regulations for the kissing are not mentioned, but the diversion evidently has a place in this novel frolic of fashion.

The old Knickerbocker custom of calling upon friends on New Year's Day is, the same writer informs us, in danger of extinction, as the calls, which used to be confined to the parlour, have extended to the kitchen, and the servants are too much engaged to attend upon their mistresses' guests. The principal callers below, it seems, are the tradespeople or their assistants, who are in the habit of paying more businesslike visits, for orders, &c.; and they are supplied with crackers, Bologna sausages, cakes, fruit, tea and coffee, and even whisky, at the expense of the 'people of the house.' The arrangement is objectionable, from the parlour point of view, on more grounds than one; but it is considered that, in the event of a contest on the subject, the kitchen will win. It is mentioned, by-the-way, that the etiquette of New Year's Day has changed somewhat of late years—and it must have changed indeed since Mr. Sala wrote a certain wonderful account of the amount of drinking transacted by thirsty people going from house to house—for refreshments, we are told, are being considerably discontinued. Formerly it was incumbent even upon the ladies of the house to attend to the wants of their guests, waiting upon them instead of servants—the latter being required only to remove empty plates and glasses. But 'the advance in luxury, and what

is called refinement, has changed all this. The elaborate dressing of modern times will not admit of any exertion on the part of the wearers; only studied and graceful motions and attitudes are admissible.' And it is added that the mistress of the house must find it additionally embarrassing to her toilette if she has to wait upon others. In an article elsewhere, by-the-way, we find that at general receptions even such refreshments as tea and coffee are being omitted. A great lady set the fashion, saying she was tired of seeing the trays handed about and hearing 'No, thank you,' on every side from people who were afraid of soiling their gloves. It is now understood in the best circles that the visitors eat and drink what they want before leaving their homes.

'Young Ladies in their Homes' is a subject which one of the fashionable correspondents treats with charming sentiment; and he especially speaks of two delightful girls whom he knows, who are remarkable for the ease and grace with which they do the duties of hostess. Then follows a technical description of prevailing toilettes, including a remark upon the manner in which many of the elder girls have the bodies of their dresses cut—something below the shoulder-blades. This is an innovation, it seems, and the blame is laid upon Europe!

In a letter from Washington, describing the 'inauguration of the reception season,' we are told that 'the Washington girl has now her campaign mapped out clearly;' and that 'she can open her week with the receptions of the ladies of the Supreme Court, the Navy Yard, and the Marine Barracks.' At the latter place 'the chief attraction is Miss Zillen, eldest daughter of the

commanding officer and sister to Mrs. Robert Stockton, a stylish little lady, whose romantic runaway match was a nine-days' wonder when it happened.' Then we are told that 'among the cabinet receptions our young lady will find Mrs. Fish's the most stately, and Mrs. Creswell's the most lively;' and of one of the hostesses, Mrs. Belknap, it is said 'Those who do not know her think her very handsome; those who do know her think that her greatest charm is her manner.' Mrs. Williams, 'the brilliant wife of the Attorney-General,' is described as 'a good conversationalist and a great politician.' Other ladies of the ministry are discussed with equal freedom, and it is remarked that a recent social decision has relieved them from the duty of returning calls, which saves them a great deal of trouble. The following is too good to be missed:—'Thursday is the day of the ladies of the Senate, prominent among whom is the beautiful wife of senator Ames, who, as Blanche Butler, was as much loved as admired. We miss Mrs. Sprague this winter. Will she not be here, I wonder? Not Mrs. Ames' beauty, nor Mrs. Stockton's style, nor Mrs. Logan's piquancy, nor Mrs. Chandler's elegance, can supply the place of this beautiful woman, whom some happy correspondent once called the Eugénie of Washington, the standard of grace, loveliness, and fashion.' Mrs. Grant, we are informed, receives on Saturdays, and 'the President frequently appears before the afternoon is over.' And in another letter the same writer says, 'Apart from all fulsome compliments or servile notice, there are few young ladies in Washington society more universally admired than the daughter of the President. Pretty—more

with the prettiness and brightness of youth than with regular beauty — animated without loss of dignity, absolutely free from any assumptions which her position might make pardonable, simple and tasteful in her dress, this little Republican Princess has on her own merits a very enviable position in the society introduced to her this winter for the first time.'

Some ladies, it appears, with curious taste, are not proud of these 'opinions of the press' on their behalf; but 'our own correspondent' seems quite unconscious of erring himself, and records a rebuff received by a gentleman of the reporting persuasion with some satisfaction.

At one of 'the Thursdays' of the wife of a popular senator, a gentleman walked into the parlour unannounced. The lady, who is remarkable for dignity, rose, and after bidding her visitor good afternoon, waited to hear what he had to say.

'Is not this Mrs. ——'s?' said he.

'It is,' replied the lady, 'but you have the advantage in knowing my name.'

'I am reporter for the ——,' said the gentleman; and as his hostess made no comment upon that, he added, 'This is my first winter at Washington.'

'I hope you will enjoy it,' she said, with chilling politeness, seeing that he expected some remark from her.

Then there was a pause.

'Do you go out a great deal?' asked the reporter.

'No,' answered Mrs. ——, 'I go into society very little, and as I have a great horror of appearing in the papers, I hope you will do me the favour to leave me unnoticed.'

The same gentleman does not seem to have found much favour

at some other houses; and one young lady, whose appearance he had described as 'neat,' was heard to remark that it would have been civil in him to have said that she looked clean and respectable!

The writer who objects to the reporter goes into some interesting agonies about the injuries inflicted upon society through the unfortunate fact that Mrs. Creswell's ceilings have a habit of falling in, so that dancing is not safe in her mansion. Then he laments the absence of Mrs. Bowers; but notices as a compensation the return of Mrs. Hallett Kilbourne, over whose costume of black velvet he goes into raptures. The simple fact with which he concludes speaks for itself: 'Her bonnet was black also.'

A 'Bachelor's German' is a mystic object to the uninitiated. One thinks of the possible sausage of some lonely man who cannot get food cooked in his chambers. But a 'German' means a musical party in the German style, and appears to be a very popular form of entertainment. Special forms of entertainment, by-the-way, appear to be in great demand; and in some parts of the country — notably in Chicago — we hear of oyster suppers, for the benefit of chapels, and held in the chapels themselves. At some of the receptions at Washington, so far from the ladies not being able to move on account of their costumes, they actually dance, and that in their afternoon dresses. Balls, here, as elsewhere, are continual, and I suspect that there is more dancing in America than in any other country. In all the accounts the ladies' dresses are described, not formally as in our Court papers, but in familiar style, with such additional comments as I have noted. One lady is described as wearing 'a very dark purple

costume, relieved by bands of gold-coloured satin, embroidered with black—a very beautiful dress, but too old for her fresh young face.' At one place we find a reference to Mrs. Pettigru-King-Bowen and her husband—'she famous as Miss Pettigru for her beauty, and as Mrs. Bowen borrowing notoriety from the bigamy case of her present husband, which attracted great attention at Washington.' Speaking of powdered hair being trying to the complexion, it is satisfactory to find that 'Miss Miller can wear it without fear,' At 'the Illinois State Sociable,' we are told of 'a Baltimore girl,' daughter of the ex-mayor of Chicago, attracting a great deal of attention, with the addition that 'she is very beautiful and dresses most richly. She has always been a belle in Baltimore, and the history of her loves and lovers would form a first-class romance.'

Apropos of powdered hair, it is notable that grey is coming into fashion—the effect being produced upon black or brown locks through exhausting the colour by well-known chemical processes. The desired effect is not simply blonde, according to the still modish mania in England, but real venerable grey, entitling the acquirer of course to respect and reverence. The caprices of fashion, it is notable, find their way into the English papers only by degrees. Many social customs and habits prevalent among our own 'Upper Ten Thousand' are as strange to the mass of the people as those of

some remote foreign country. Now and then somebody writes a new Book of Etiquette, which is sure to be full of glorious blunders, and sets those who aspire to follow its precepts most amusingly astray. A few novels now and then give a good idea of fashionable society; but these scarcely impart useful information in distinct form; so that the fashions of classes in this country in most respects, except dress, vary considerably. But in America every social change is chronicled in the journals as soon as it takes place, and everybody can follow who pleases. It is in this respect that I have referred to Transatlantic fashions as democratic. A few very superb persons, for instance, adopt a new style of visiting card; the correspondents at once note the fact, and the idea is at everybody's disposal. Only the other day I saw it announced that invitation cards this season were being engraved in the handwriting of the inviters; so nobody need use the formal 'copper-plate' style for want of knowing better. This I gather from the journals, so I suppose it is true.

On the whole it cannot be said that Republican institutions, in the case of America, are productive of any social security. Pleasure appears to be a business with the mass of society, and fashion a despotism worthy of the dark ages—one of the signs being the wonderfully flourishing condition of the trade of Jenkinsism.

SIDNEY BLANCHARD.



AMID THE ROSES.

I SEEK her midst the roses, and
 My soul is sore for love.
 Her image beams serenely grand
 As Cynthia's form above,
 Enchas'd in halo. Brave my hand
 To grasp thy treasure trove !

I seek her midst the roses, for
 I may no longer wait
 A suitor reckless at her door,
 And flinch to learn my fate.
 I dare not hope. I dare no more
 Than humbly supplicate.

I seek her midst the roses, where
 Soft pleasures, redolent
 Of gracious things, enrich the air
 Impregnate with their scent.
 She can but choose to hear a prayer
 With odour thus besprent.

I meet her midst the roses. Yes ;
 Hard by the mossy briars.
 One bud she clasps in close caress,
 So cold, though near her fires.
 To live as that, nor more nor less,
 Would surfeit Jove's desires.

I greet her midst the roses, while
 Fierce burns the breath of May.
 Why turns she to avoid my smile ?
 Why cast her bud away ?
 Just Phœbus ! could a thing of guile
 Deserve a darker day ?

Yet, no ! Amid the roses, I
 Will deem her cruel-kind :
 When maiden frowns disdainfully
 'Twere wisdom to be blind.
 'Twere weak to count a wilful eye
 The reflex of her mind.

Thus, tremulous midst the roses, lest
 My love its love should miss,
 I falter forth a bold request
 That she will grant me bliss—
 But once to sip her best of best,
 The nectar of a kiss.

She midst her roses stands apart
In silvern panoply
Of innocence. But Cupid's dart,
Though fitted warily,
Wings not its flight. Must I depart
Shamed of my urgency ?

Ye roses ! ' Such request, Sir Knight,
Fond heart should never rue.'
I hear her whisper, laughing light,
' Though best of best for you,
Nor coral lip, nor forehead white,
Rather this silken shoe !'

An echo from the roses rends
My bosom and the sky.
Humbly I kneel. My right hand bends
Her latchet to untie,
Whilst she a dainty foot extends
In gesture mockingly.

Then mid the blossoms ruby red
The Boy-God draws his shaft.
Home has the love-tipt arrow sped
On roseate odours waft.
She thrills. Her dainty heart has bled
Ere my poor lips have quaffed.

In true obeisance hers, not her,
The fire-containing ice.
No cause to cringe, no fear to err ;
She changes in a trice
From white to rose ; confessing, ' Sir,
You give me Paradise.'

Ye swains, amid the roses find
'Twere wisdom to be true.
Your Chloe's test may seem unkind,
And hard your Chloe's shoe ;
Yet when she proves your constant mind
She'll e'en consent to you.

COMPTON READE.



RAPE OF THE GAMP.

CHAPTER XXIV.

MAN OVERBOARD.

NOW the biggest man in the victorious Oxford University boat raged and fretted in his diminutive cabin, smoking many pipes in supreme defiance of Captain M'Leod, and reading this horrid letter of Frank's by his surreptitious lamp, until it drove him wild. Not a word had he written to or heard from the Brownes during his year's exile in America. Poor Martin, in the innocence of his unsuspecting heart, and glowing with delight at some little favour which Janet, in her weariness, had extended to him, had said to his old tutor, during their last term at Oxford, words which had induced the latter to think she had tacitly accepted his younger rival. And it must be remembered that he had done his utmost to destroy her regard for him. So when the news of Eleanor's death reached him, it only affected him with a tender and most charitable melancholy. Of Janet and Martin he fervently ejaculated 'God speed them both!' and went on his dreary way to a country where he knew that life was cheaply held; for on proposing to insure his own at a first-rate office, it had been courteously declined; 'the risks in Mexico at the present crisis, and under the present state of affairs, being so manifold.' Nevertheless the seductive secretary hoped they should see him back safe and sound, and that he would wish to renew his proposition after having evaded the dangers of war in such a savage and unhealthy region.

It was the trifling episode of his conversation with Martin which

induced him so suddenly to accept this engagement, and to maintain for so long an unbroken silence with his friends in Pedlington. He honestly wished Janet to be free to make and retain her own choice, and feared that anything approaching to an advance on his part, now that he was free, would seem like claiming her on the score of his generosity, and of the previous love-passage between them.

But when the stormy year of his campaigning was drawing to a close, he wrote to Frank from Mexico, announcing his return by way of Vera Cruz and New York, and casually remarking that he supposed he should have to congratulate Janet and Martin on his arrival. The letter in his hand was a brief answer from Frank, received through his agents in New York, saying how glad they all had been to see his handwriting again, how much more glad they would be to see his face, and expressing astonishment that he had not written before leaving England, or for so many months since. As to the bit of *badinage* about Martin and Janet (Frank said), of course she could not help poor Martin's persistent folly. But they all liked him well enough, and thought he was really enamoured of some poetical ideal, and had chosen Janet to impersonate this. Alas! how often is this indeed the case! Frank proceeded to say that ever since Lyte's articles had appeared in the '— Review,' that periodical had entirely supplanted the 'Oxford Chronicle,' and the whole family had grown quite learned in the geography and cur-

rent military and political history of 'The Latin Empire.' Then in a postscript Frank added: 'The sooner you turn up, my dear fellow, the better. A certain person, who has now arrived at years of discretion, is becoming rather more cracked than discreet; and I really don't know what may not happen if the state of suspense is protracted. She says now that she knows you won't come home, but will stay in New York. I wonder whether you will have stumbled across your old enemy George Baily at New York. Probably not. But it seems he has fallen upon his legs in the United States; and though he is a degraded man now, I must do him the justice to say that he has scraped together and returned the five hundred pounds put by for Hubert, of which he had (to the best of our belief) defrauded the governor. He has had the impudence to write to Blanche and ask her to join him out there. We all oppose the idea; but there is no knowing what a woman may not do in such a case. I suppose you do not know that Nelly is to be married to Fuller on the 1st of February, and that they sail for Canada about a week after the wedding.'

It is hardly necessary to say that while the paragraph in the body of the letter which repudiated any idea of Martin's success would by itself have been a source of delight to our returning exile, that passage in the postscript alarmed and agitated him. Why was not Frank more explicit? What could he mean? One thing was evident now beyond a doubt. Janet had been constant to him even under the cruel blow of his departure without a word of encouragement spoken or written, after she had heard of his freedom. But now, at length, Frank feared something from the protraction of her sus-

pense. He was not a man to speak prematurely. What was it that he feared? Was she, in anger or despair, about to throw herself away upon some man whom she did not love? Or was her health giving way under the strain?

Well Lyte remembered that two or three years previously Frank had hinted that this passion was 'consuming her.' It was during the short conversation which arose between them apropos of the bottle of perfume. But in the long interval which had elapsed since then he had persistently tried to starve out that regard of hers, not anticipating his own freedom, and since knowing of his own release had pursued his former plan in order to leave *her* free. But now it appeared that she had never wavered, and was suffering past endurance from his seeming inconstancy. Oh! if she could only read his true heart, and see how she was cherished there! Surely, Bedford Lyte insisted to himself, as some millions of lovers have done before, no woman was ever so singly and purely worshipped as she had been in that secret shrine. Nor was he very far wrong. The man had loved the girl with more devotion than many girls have lavished upon them in this degenerate age. He had proved it too, though after a fashion little likely to have yielded her much comfort hitherto.

Should he find her thin and wasted, with her beauty half gone, her radiance dimmed? Almost he hoped it might be so, that he might prove how far above such mortal chances was his mature love for her. He thought of Osseo and Owenoe the faithful, and declared solemnly to himself that if his Janet had become 'wrinkled, old, and ugly,' as did Owenoe, he would still be true, as Osseo was; and doubtless he would have been

so. There are some men who *can* only love once, though as boys they might have slipped, as Lyte had done. Yet had he possessed twelve millions of gold doubloons instead of twelve hundred pounds (to which sum his little savings amounted), he would have given every fraction of it, without a murmur, to save her beauty—so far in his eyes was it beyond every source of actual or possible delight which he had ever known.

As he fumed and fretted, the sea rose higher, and the wind raged more fiercely in fitful and sudden gusts. Every half-hour the mate had been shortening sail during the last watch. It was now four o'clock in the morning, and blowing a strong gale. The ship, no longer steady and upright, at times careened over to leeward, then righting again with a heavy lurch, appeared to suffer a strain through her whole body, as though the knees and joists were parting company, and the ocean about to pour in and engulf them.

As eight bells struck, the mate thundered at the captain's door. That mariner enjoyed profound slumbers under the most agitating circumstances, and had already confided to Mr. Lyte that he could sleep 'till the crack of doom,' if he only once got 'soundly off in a gale of wind.'

Being aware of this idiosyncrasy on the part of his commander, Mr. Jones (a small but sturdy mariner) pounded away, regardless alike of knuckles and panels.

'What now?' roared the captain from within.

'Blowin' a gale, sir,' bellowed the officer.

'Have you made her snug?' (from within).

'Ay, ay, sir.'

'How's her head?'

'East-node-east' (in Mr. Jones's stentorian conventional).

'How's the wind?' (from within).

'No-ode' (still more stentorian and conventional).

'Then let it blow!' (from within).

This dialogue, rude, and almost horrible as it may seem, in the face of danger impending over the lives of so many persons who were innocent of the craft and avarice which had actuated the owners, rather inspired the passenger with confidence in the captain. Evidently, even when half drunk and half asleep, he could follow up an idea through its legitimate stages, and form a conclusion which, though rash, was based upon the satisfactory evolution of that idea.

But Mr. Jones was equally worthy of respect, and, moreover, was sober. After a pause, during which the plunging and lurching of the ship indicated great difficulty in steering her on the present course, he again thundered at the captain's door.

'What now-ow-ow?' roared the angry commander.

'Blowin' terrible hard, sir,' bellowed the mate.

'So it was last time you came kickin' up a row here,' retorted the captain, who supposed he had been asleep for a whole watch (four hours) since the last disturbance. 'How's her head?' he continued, yawning terribly.

'East-node-east,' as before.

'How's the wind?'

'No-o-ode!' louder than Boreas itself.

'Then let it blow, and,' et cætera, dimly audible.

'We'd better heave her to, sir,' roared Mr. Jones.

At this outrageous breach of discipline, Captain M'Leod, looking like the pictures of sanguinary buccaneers in boys' books, with a fiery visage surrounded with fierce black hair, with glaring eyes and

glistening teeth, appeared suddenly at his door in a white guernsey and woollen drawers.

'Pray who commands this ship, sir?' he inquired gravely.

'Why, you do, sir,' replied the mate, uncovering.

'And you've made her snug, using your own judgment, Mr. Jones? and you tell me the wind is north, and the ship steering her course? That is so, is it not?'

'That's so, sir.'

'Then let the ship continue on her course; and tell the officer of the watch, if anything is carried away, to clap it on again.'

Before Mr. Jones had securely fastened on his sou'wester again a snort like the battle-cry of a wild boar, from the recesses of the stern cabin, announced that Captain M'Leod, of the 'Adriatic,' was again in the embrace of the drowsy god. Then Lyte heard the discomfited mate growling like a grizzly bear, and blundering up the steps which led from the cuddy to the poop-deck; and when he got there, uniting with the second mate (whose watch it was) in new orders for reducing the amount of sail. Not being able to sleep, Lyte went up also. The night seemed to be pitch-dark, and by the mysterious light of the binnacle lamp the men at the wheel looked like two Brobdingnagians. Presently the mate came aft and stooped over the binnacle to see the compass. He looked like Magog, and the other two like Og and Gog. The wind yelled and shrieked through the rigging. The cries of the men taking up a third reef in the maintop-sail sounded like the inarticulate howling of lost spirits sent to wander in the trackless deep. Every now and then, as the ship surged up the side of a soaring wave, or plunged into some tremendous ocean hollow, a white gleam of surf skimmed

up or down the heaving mass, merely serving to make the darkness visible; and when the passenger struggled and grappled his way to the forward part of the poop, he could distinguish, partly by sight and partly by sound and the huge vibrations of the ship, that the crest of every wave, itself an immense body of water, was curling over the weather bulwark, and seething to and fro on the main-deck, always being replenished by another before it could escape at the lee-scuppers. After a while, a rift in the clouds allowing a faint glimmer of starlight to appear, Lyte saw the sailors gliding mysteriously, like hobgoblins, down the main rigging, and apparently dropping recklessly into the turbid pool on deck. But really no human being unaided could have got through it, and ropes were strained along from poop to forecastle, by which the descent and transit either way were made.

Finding after a while that the officer of the watch was clutching hold of something, and hanging on beside him, Lyte shouted at him, 'Rough-and-tumble kind of work this!' which intellectual remark he had to bellow at the top of his voice about half-a-dozen times, the officer seeming most anxious to hear it, but unable to do so at first on account of the whizzing and roaring of wind and waves, and the manifold noises of a ship straining in distress.

'We shall ketch it—afore long,' was the cheerful reply, which the passenger caught at once, either from the seaman's more judicious selection of time or of his words. After which encouragement, at the imminent risk of his life, Mr. Lyte regained the companion ladder, and blundered back to his little cabin, where he found Tommy still balancing himself on one leg, and with his head still tucked under

his wing, as if the ship were upright and motionless in a harbour of refuge.

This sort of thing continued not only without abatement, but rather getting worse and worse, during the morning watch and the whole of the next day, the standing rigging and the bulwarks creaking and grinding in a most detestable regularity of dissonance as the vessel scudded and lurched through a heavy cross-sea. The main-deck was constantly afloat, and though as yet happily the cuddy and state-rooms (in the poop) were high and dry, it is scarcely pleasant to be in mid-Atlantic in the howling month of February, on board of a ship whose decks and bulwarks form a tank which holds a gurgling, seething pool, ever changing its course, rushing to and fro, hither and thither, with the pitching and rolling of the ship, and dashing with mimic fury of the war without against every obstacle which opposes its movements. Bedford's bones ached worse than they did after rowing either of his two university races, or after running his victorious two-mile race against the champions of Cambridge, London, Dublin, and Durham, in which he gained for himself and his college undying renown. Why, it was publicly stated, after due reference to 'Bell's Life' and 'The Field,' that the time in which Lyte accomplished the two miles was fully one-fifth of a second less than in any race on record. The Durham man was beaten by one second and a fifth; the London man by one and two-fifths; the others were nowhere. So terrific had the pace been from start to finish that all the quidnuncs present anticipated a breakdown on the part of Lyte.

Now the hero's running days seemed to have run themselves out. Browbeaten and dejected in

aspect, after two or three hopeless and helpless scrambles and tumblings on to the poop and down again, he sat humbly over a novel at the cuddy table, having coaxed the steward for a gravitating lamp, grasping the rack with tenacious digits, entwining his noble legs in the lashings underneath, and barely managing to hold his own, so fickle is human glory!

Captain M'Leod had been restored to a sense of duty at eight o'clock in the morning, when the officer of the ensuing watch again politely suggested heaving-to. She was too deep in the *water*, he said, being from Somersetshire. She did lurch terrible, and the masts were in danger, he added.

'Then let her go off two points, Mr. Fitzgerald,' roared the resolute captain. 'Give her the foresail (with a reef in it), and then *let her rip!* Now remember, Mr. Crays—you and your men—her course is due east.'

Mr. Crays, in a roar like a savage bear, responded 'Ay, ay, sir!'

'And you, Mr. Fitz., if she carries anything away, you clap it on again. And if the wind shifts (which it won't), let me know.' And down the mariner stumbled, bestowing upon his sore and studious guest at the cuddy table a sounding smack between the shoulder-blades, inviting him to 'keep up his pecker,' and to Bedford's delight (somewhat tempered with apprehension), announcing his determination to 'let her rip,' i.e., to proceed on her course at all hazards, when more prudent navigators would heave-to.

The gale was now blowing steadily from the north-west, and the vessel, being steered due east, went more freely with the wind on her quarter. She was running under treble-reefed fore and main-top sails, a reefed foresail, and a foretop-mast stay-sail. At inter-

vals of two hours, and sometimes less, Captain M'Leod appeared on the poop, with a countenance like 'furious Goth' or 'fiery Hun,' stared savagely at the elements, at the two unfortunates who were steering the stubborn ship, and at the officer of the watch, after which silent protest against nature and art he would disappear. 'Sticking to your seat like grim death, eh, Mr. Lyte?' he would say, while passing that unhappy individual at the cuddy table. At last he dragged Lyte into his stern cabin, and fed him on Bologna sausage, Bourbon whisky, and Angostura bitters. Cooked meals were out of the question. The cook's galley was an island in the middle of a whirlpool, and that sable functionary himself enjoying sweet sleep and balmy oblivion in the regions below. Nevertheless the steward promised Mr. Lyte a cup of tea in the evening, if he could 'only get a bit of fire in the cuddy stove.' Alas! they knew not what the evening would bring forth.

The afternoon brought forth not more, perhaps, than was dimly foreboded, but certainly more than was distinctly foreseen. At 2 P.M., while his guest was, at the captain's request, 'pitching into' a Bologna sausage, and the good ship 'Adriatic' was pitching into the waves with an apparent intention of never coming out again, a tremendous *bang* and a *smash* were distinctly audible in the stern cabin, though the wind was carrying sounds forward.

'Hullo!' observed Lyte, pausing with sausage in air.

Bang! Smash! For a few moments the two reports seemed to hush all the previous grinding, grating, creaking, and groaning of casks, barrels, ropes, and timbers which proclaimed the general distress.

'There they go,' rejoined M'Leod

in a sort of oracular response to Lyte's 'Hallo!'

Presently a large amphibious boatswain, clad in yellow tarpaulin, and dripping with Atlantic brine, appeared in the doorway.

Grinning hideously, he blurts out, 'Foe's'l carried away, sir.'

'And?' the captain inquired, being fully aware that as yet only the *bang* was accounted for.

'And main-deck swept clean as a whistle. Cook's galley, bulwarks, water-casks, barrel, spare spars, and all, clean gone!'

'Pipe all hands to grog aft immediately. Tell Mr. Fitzgerald to set the main try-sail, and then set to work and bend a new storm foresail.'

'Ay, ay, sir,' and away went the amphibious one.

Lyte made it a point of honour to ask no further questions. And though M'Leod, when drinking freely, was not usually communicative, yet being touched by this consideration on the part of his guest, he spoke out. 'It must be one of two things,' he said: 'we must keep on moving pretty fast, and take care *not to get pooped*, or we must heave-to. If I heave-to, the ship won't ride. She's too deep, as Mr. Green says. I doubt if we could keep her up to the wind.'

'What is being pooped?' asked the landsman innocently.

'If they don't get that try-sail set, and bend another foresail, you'll see before long. Only then you'll never be able to tell the tale. You see, we're pretty nearly running before the wind. If one of these big rollers comes along faster than we keep moving, it smashes in our poop, and down we go stern foremost.'

At this juncture the howling of the brave fellows was heard in midship. They had swallowed their rum, and were setting the

try-sail—a service of danger, now that the main-deck was swept clear of her bulwarks, and was open to the fury of every roller through the summit of which they rushed, and whose foaming crest closed in upon them, as if it were claiming them for its own.

Among brave men in danger a sort of freemasonry exists, as undoubtedly is the case also among cowards. M'Leod had strongly taken to his new ally, and had persuaded him to light his trusty old pipe and smoke it in his own sacred cabin.

At 3.45 P.M. another crash, loud though distant, was heard.

'The foretop-mast, by ——!' exclaimed the captain, now springing to his feet and hurrying up on deck. Lyte followed at once. This was a twofold disaster, the foretop-sail and foretop-mast stay-sail both coming down together, depriving the ship of all sail forward and encumbering her with the wreck. Of course it had been impossible in this stress of weather to bend a new foresail since the former one was carried away, so that now the ship was scudding under only the reefed maintop-sail and the main try-sail, and it was almost as difficult to keep her before the wind as to heave her to.

All hands were immediately summoned, and the wreck cleared away as rapidly as possible under the circumstances. Lyte, seeing a service toward in which he could be of use, scrambled down for his bowie-knife, went along the ropes to the fore rigging, and there worked manfully at cutting away the wreck, though he narrowly escaped being washed overboard more than once, and only owed his life to his own agility and tenacity of grasp.

No sooner was all the topmast rigging cleared away than the forestay-sail was set, and incre-

dible exertions were made by all hands to bend a new foresail. The moon came to the rescue, and though the ship was terribly knocked about, and the steering apparatus much strained in the meanwhile, they had the new foresail set before midnight. Then the captain, at the urgent request of the officers (for which Mr. Lyte silently cursed them), hove the ship to, and turned in.

By some obscure mental process it was evident to Lyte that, whereas officers and men all liked their captain, all equally distrusted him. The overlading the vessel, in which M'Leod had no concern, was now acknowledged on all hands; and though Lyte saw that the man upon whom now chiefly all their lives depended was a drunkard, he also saw that there was a vast reserve of energy about him, drunk or sober, and that he was capable of judicious and energetic action if this could be called into operation at the right moment. Putting together M'Leod's age (about fifty), his robust health, his position, and reputation, it was clear that he could not habitually have indulged too freely while in command of a ship. In all probability the overlading of the vessel had preyed upon his mind in the present instance, and co-operated with other causes of anxiety, to which he had already alluded in conversation with his guest, to cause the present most inopportune outbreak. Consoling himself as well as he could in this way, and with the reflection that the officers were able and willing, Lyte once more 'turned in,' and whilst doing so stroked and coaxed his drowsy little bird, which opened one eye and peeped at him curiously; for he was weighed upon with a kind of apprehension that this would be their last meeting. The small bird manifested a power of sleeping, and a dexterity

in poisoning himself on one leg with his head invisible, which were provoking. It seemed to imply that in causing his master to lose a passage on the finest steamer afloat, and to intrust himself on a ship which exhibited the strongest possible tendency to go to the bottom, he had fulfilled his terrestrial destiny, and had no more functions to perform than becoming an insensate ball of fluff, and maintaining his equilibrium by night and day with a sublime disregard of the laws of gravitation.

Again M'Leod emulated his passenger and bird in the profundity of his slumbers and in his practical defiance of certain sound theoretical maxims. To Bedford Lyte, in those anxious, sleepless hours, that versatile ship, 'Adriatic,' large as she was, seemed to achieve every variety of position except the inverted vertical. To say that occasionally he ascertained his heels to be where a man naturally looks for his head would fall ludicrously short of the actual state of the case. After a couple of hours' violent straining and struggling to maintain a horizontal position commensurate with the limits of his berth, he gave that up, as men have given up trying to square the circle. Jamming himself into a corner to leeward in such a posture that nothing short of an absolute somersault on the part of the 'Adriatic' could dislodge him, he recommenced the perusal of his novel by the light of a gravitating lamp. Fortunately for him, it was the inimitable 'Tale of Two Cities,' by Charles Dickens; and the capers cut by his berth served as a ludicrous illustration of the lively coffin which hopped, skipped, and jumped along in pursuit of the fugitive and terrified son of Jerry.

Thus the wearisome night-watches wore away far less tedi-

ously than they might have done had the modern delineator of humanity never lived and wrought. Already the first glimmer of wintry dawn was peering through the scuttle, and paling the twinkle of his dying lamp as the ship rolled to starboard, when suddenly the 'Adriatic' was convulsed from bow to stern-post, from mast-head to keel, by a prodigious shock. Lyte had scarcely time to notice that she swerved and staggered in a manner quite different from all her former evolutions, when the ocean rushed in upon him in a drenching, blinding flood. Whence it came he knew not; but what mattered that? One thing he knew beyond a doubt: his frail door had flown open under the pressure, and it was surging into his little cabin and out again breast high.

In this horrible predicament he yet formed and carried out one idea. That the ship was foundering he hastily took for granted, and though a powerful swimmer, he knew that a man unaided cannot live long in a heavy sea. He therefore slipped off his pilot coat, dropped it in the pool in which he stood, dragged out his cork jacket from under his bolster and put it on, then floundered and scrambled up on to the poop-deck, only observing as he went that the water seemed to be leaving the cuddy faster than it came in.

The captain was already on deck, and pounced upon him instantly. The steering apparatus of the vessel had given way, from the tremendous strain upon it; she had suddenly *broached to*, and had fallen into the trough of the sea, where she lay almost on her beam ends, and exposed to the full fury of the waves, which now beat even over the lofty poop. One of these waves had burst open Bedford's cabin scuttle, and had poured an angry stream of water upon

him as he sat pent up against the lee bulk-head. Another had burst open the cuddy doors and sent a tremendous volume of water surging up and down the whole length of the saloon. Meanwhile the two gallant fellows at the wheel and Mr. Green, the second mate, had been washed overboard, and were irretrievably lost; and when M'Leod reached the deck he found himself alone on the poop of a foundering ship.

Now suddenly, to his great joy, having a strong and willing man at his elbow, Captain M'Leod snatched a favourable opportunity and seated Lyte on his buttocks with a coil of the tiller-chain twisted round his left wrist, and grasped below with both hands about fourteen inches from the block, and implored him for God's sake, and as he valued all their lives, not to let go till he came back.

Then M'Leod vanished; and before we attempt to indicate Bedford Lyte's fate we may as well say that the captain's enterprise was to dare the perils of the main-deck, and trust to the strength and courage of his passenger to keep a little control of the rudder until he could bring the carpenter aft, and two or three more men, to relieve Lyte from his awful position, and resume the steering of the disabled vessel.

The difficulty and perplexity of Lyte's situation are wholly past the comprehension of a landsman. There he sat, sternly tugging and straining at that awful chain, for some long, long minutes, which hung

'Like Joshua's moon in Ajalon.'

Great masses of water, breaking over the ship's counter, hurled themselves upon him, drenching him to the skin, blinding his eyes, which he was wholly unable to

wipe, and gradually freezing the very strength out of his hands and wrists, to which the cold, slippery chain now clung with a deadly coil. His back, or, rather, only the lower part of it, was planted against a projection not high enough to afford him a fair fulcrum; his feet against the still lower and rounded staple which held the block through which the chain would have run had he abandoned it. Had he done so, the vessel would again have been at the mercy of the ruthless elements, and would in all probability have been sunk in less than a minute. Of this he had a vague but positive apprehension.

Every muscle of his powerful frame was strained to the utmost. The invincible will which had triumphed over so many obstacles, moral and physical, was set more firmly than his sinews. Appreciating blindly the value of the tremendous charge intrusted to him, he had resolved, if need be, to allow his hands and wrists to be dragged into the block, and so to check the outgoing of the chain at the price of a horrible and most painful death. A momentary pang on behalf of the poor little bird which had involved him in this fate pierced his heart. Then came with lightning rapidity a perception that this death was the result of having preferred his birds and his stubborn solitude to a frank confession of his early fault; and that happy, though perhaps humiliating, confidence which he might have enjoyed with Henry Phelps, if he would only have ventured on that confession. How much had that stupid, false pride cost him! And the fault, after all, had been so lightly forgiven. These regrets plunged swift, keen arrows, as it were, into his mind and heart. Then followed a smaller, though at the moment a

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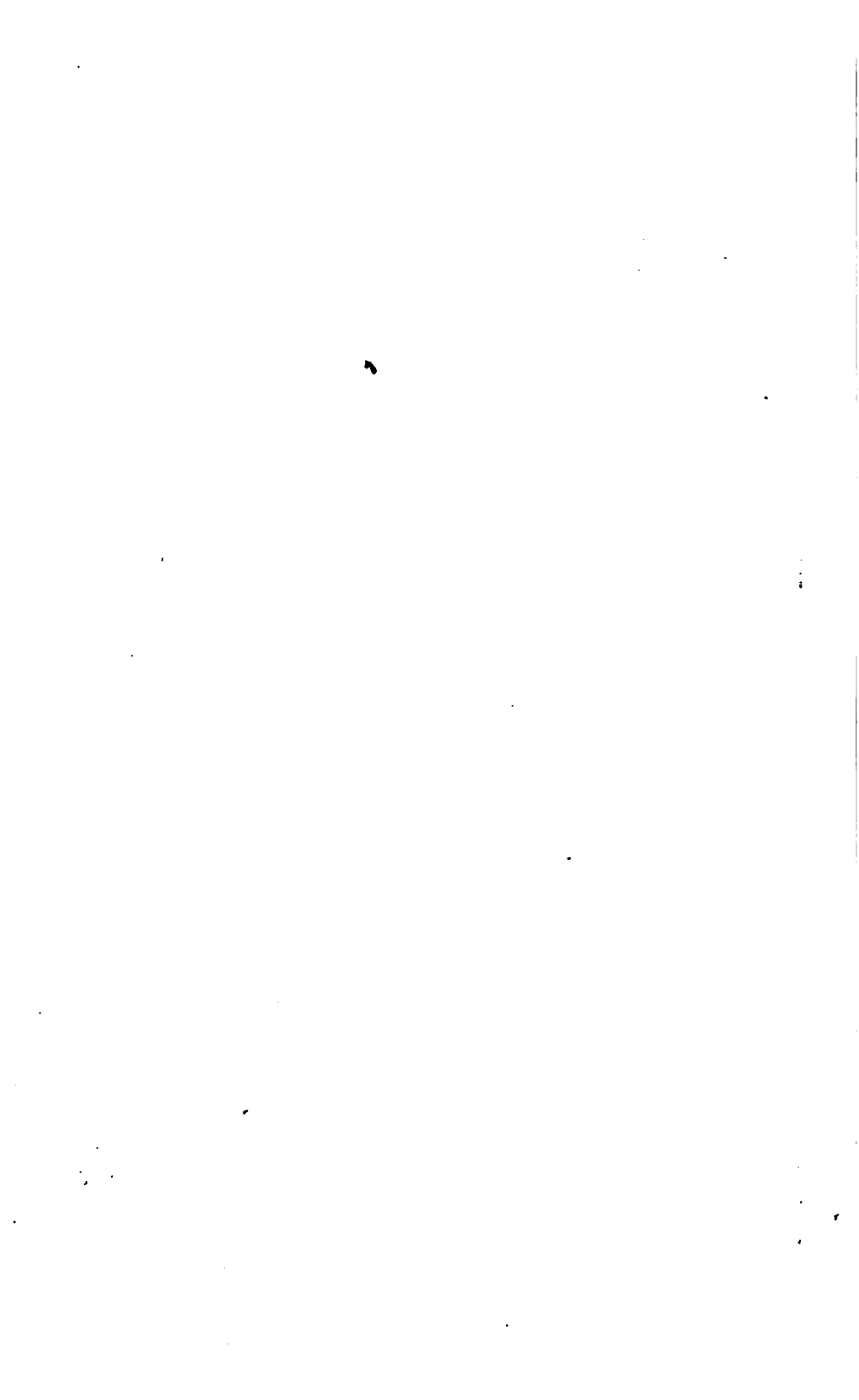
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RAPE OF THE GAMP.

'I should blush to step on English ground, if I left those foreigners to die like kittens.'



still more cruel, pang, that he was not now so placed as to bring all his immense strength into active operation. He thought of the Herculean efforts which he had made at the critical moments in the great struggle between Oxford and Cambridge, and forgot that instead of pulling an oar in a wager-boat he was now saving a three-thousand-ton ship from destruction. He almost cried aloud in his agony: 'I could have pulled the chain six inches farther out—farther out—in spite of these cruel jerks, if I only had a—a—purchase. But now— Oh! I am going. Janet! Janet!'

One of those cruel jerks, the furious action of the sea on the loosened rudder, communicated by the tiller to the chain which he was holding, was just dragging his hands into the hateful block, when a sudden relief, which drew the chain a few inches out again, released him.

'Let go! let go!' shouted a stentorian voice above him. 'Let go!' It was Mr. Crays, the taciturn third mate, who, gathering from the captain's orders to the carpenter in what position the passenger was left, had snatched up a huge iron hook, and hastened along the ropes which connected the fore-castle with the poop, and had caught a link of the chain between Lyte's hands and the block. The iron hook, which was now inverted in the link, was sufficient to secure the chain from being drawn farther out; and now the carpenter arrived, with the captain, bringing a lighted lantern and some necessary implements, and when Lyte had cleared his eyes of the salt-water, he was able to assist them in temporarily refitting the tiller and helm.

Alas! the two helmsmen and the sturdy second mate could never be restored to their footing on

dock. But the case was too critical with the living to bestow many vain regrets on the dead. The rudder was itself loose. There was not sufficient daylight as yet for them to form an idea how loose. Of the four swivels by which the rudder is connected with the stern-post, one, two, three, or all four might be loosened or injured in some way. But it was absolutely necessary to bring the ship to the wind, and heave-to again; for the foresail, the fore stay-sail, the main top-sail, and main try-sail had all been blown to ribbons, and it would be dangerous beyond measure to attempt scudding under bare poles. So they lashed up some hammocks in the fore rigging, put the helm up, and brought her head to the wind again, and then set seriously about considering and repairing, if possible, the injury already received.

CHAPTER XXV.

AND THE LAST.

BEFORE noon on the eventful day which dawned amidst the perils of our last chapter, the crew of the 'Adriatic,' now short of three brave hearts and three pairs of willing hands, had managed by superhuman efforts to bend a new maintop-sail and a new foresail in place of those which had been carried away by the wind when the vessel broached to and swung helplessly round under that furious assault of the elements. Again the good ship, now crippled and tottering like a wounded man, was put before the wind. The sea still swept onward in gigantic foam-crested rollers, which stretched from north to south as far as the eye could reach. But now again the sun shone propitiously, and the wind, though too

strong for a disabled ship, was fair. Again they were steering due east, and careering through the mighty billows at racing speed.

'Why does she lean over so horribly to the right?' Bedford innocently asked the captain, with whom he was breakfasting in camp fashion on Bourbon whisky and Bologna sausage, having in prospect a dinner of 'Bologna sausage and Bourbon whisky — for a change,' as M'Leod facetiously expressed it.

That mariner regarded his guest with some amusement, not un-mixed with admiration. After obliging him to repeat the question, he replied, with a sly twinkle of his keen black eye, 'Well, you see, Mr. Lyte, she's got a list to starboard.'

'Oh!' responded the landsman, 'ah! Indeed!' And as he munched valiantly at the meats of Bologna (commonly at sea called 'Polonies') he murmured to himself, 'She's got a list to starboard, has she?' and wisely resolved to use his eyes instead of his tongue for further elucidation of this mystery. It seemed to him as if the vessel were bewitched. As long as she was hove-to on the port tack there was some reason for her leaning over, though even then the angle of her masts with the plane of the horizon was rather too small; but now that she was scudding freely before a strong fair wind, there was something awful in the persistent way in which she canted over, and at times he really thought she must topple over on to her beam ends, and heartily wished she had pitched her main and mizzen top-masts overboard after the foretop-mast, as she would then have had less weight to overbalance her.

The steering apparatus was also

a source of anxiety which would last as long as the voyage. This the captain spoke of with unreserved gloom, all the more freely because Lyte abstained from asking him a question on the subject, and because he had rendered such signal service connected with it in the crisis of their danger. He spoke of it plainly as 'a bad job,' and one that could not be remedied at sea more than it had been, because the mischief was under water. The breaking of the chain, of course, had been easily repaired, but no one could reach the bolts and swivels many feet under water at the stern-post of a moving ship. The elements had become propitious and the gale in part abated since that burst of its fury. 'And if it hadn't,' M'Leod added, 'we might as well have abated our efforts; for all the king's horses and all the king's men couldn't have put Humpty Dumpty on the wall again.' This was his jocular way of intimating their danger. Nor was he at all careless (as Lyte fancied) about the 'list to starboard.' But knowing that all his men were tired out, he had sent as many as could be spared below to eat and sleep.

Early in the afternoon the serious work began, the watches having being reorganised to divide the deficiency of the three missing men, and one watch sent back to rest while the other worked.

'Can I help?' asked Lyte.

'I believe you, my boy. Any strong man with a stout heart can do this sort of work, though no honest man likes it.'

The temptation to inquire precisely as to the nature of this work was strong upon the passenger, but, profiting from experience, he resisted it.

The work soon unfolded its own nature. In the first place, they took off the lid of the

main hatch and fastened a broad plank (well 'soaped) on the precipitous slope which ran sheer off into the sea on the starboard side. Then, one by one, they passed up the cases of clocks and launched them into the deep. The work was simple enough, and would actually have afforded them considerable merriment if the loss of their three messmates, which had so recently occurred, had not oppressed them with a sense of awe and grief.

After two hours' brisk work at the main hatchway, they closed and battened it down again, and went to the fore hatch to relieve the ship equally in that part. While the move was being made, M'Leod withdrew his guest on the excuse of giving him a glass of bottled ale. He also had rum served out to the men, who were behaving splendidly under an unusual strain of labour.

'I don't intend you to work any more this watch, nor to-night, my friend,' he then said to Lyte. 'Give me a willing horse, and if I work him to death, call me a fool. You have done as much work these last two hours as any two men in the watch.'

'I should like to work two hours in every watch, if you don't really object. The exercise would restore my mind and muscle,' urged Lyte.

'You won't find shovelling that wheat about good for the lungs,' resumed M'Leod.

This was coming very near the point, but Lyte asked no question, and tried to look indifferent.

'The truth is,' continued the captain, 'we've got to throw the whole cargo between-decks overboard, and then get down to that wheat with our broad wooden shovels, and ship half of it over to the port side. If it's wet, we shall have to pitch half of it after

the clocks, that is, supposing we float long enough to do it. If it's dry, you'll find it terribly dusty and suffocating work. But I can't afford to refuse your help. We're short-handed, and every hour is valuable. Do you know, Mr. Lyte—it may be soft of me—but I can't help feeling glad that my wife and little girl are praying for our safety every night and morning.'

Then after a pause he went on: 'I don't like parting with this cargo. It will cost me dear in more ways than one. But what cuts me is the loss of those three men. I once lost a whole boat's crew; but I hardly felt it more than I do this. Mr. ——— was as good a man as ever walked the deck of a ship.'

Lyte began to find many amiable traits in the character of his rollicking host, of whom it must be recorded that he did not drink to excess again during the remainder of his voyage, and that he acted with singular generosity to the relations of the three men who had been snatched so suddenly from his command.

But to return: it was found possible before nightfall to get at the lower main hatch and remove it. Then amidst the breathless suspense of the whole ship's company, Mr. Jones and the carpenter went down with a lantern to examine. Would the wheat prove to be dry or wet, that is, had the 'Adriatic' sprung a leak or not? Before many minutes had elapsed — minutes which seemed like hours to all on deck—Mr. Jones passed up the word that the surface of the wheat was dry fore and aft. Crawling along the vacant space on the larboard side, they had felt with their fingers, and encountered no moisture. M'Leod uttered a great sigh of relief. He knew his ship to be

tight and strong; but, knowing also something of the might of wind and waves, had feared that during the few minutes when she was exposed to their full fury she had received an irreparable injury in her hull. Lyte looked at the burly, roistering fellow, and saw a dimness in his eyes.

'All's well, my lads. Now go to work again,' was all he said. But the passenger understood that the lives of so many honest men weighed heavily on this skipper's conscience. For once the men stolidly disobeyed his order, still clustering round with anxious faces. There was but little space below for any one to work; and the wells were long ago choked up with wet grain, so that they could not be sounded nor the pumps used. The question still to be solved was, Would the bulk of wheat prove to be dry underneath?

'Let me go down with a shovel,' exclaimed Lyte, confident in his strength, and burning with enthusiasm.

'Or me, sir!' 'Or me!' shouted two seamen, in a breath.

'Mr. Crays will stay here, and hold the line with the lantern,' replied the captain. 'The rest of you go away and work, like honest lads.' Still the sailors closed around stolidly in a circle. 'Mr. Lyte, you are too big to move down there. Can't you see I have sent down the two smallest men in the crew?' At which speech the sailors grinned, for it was notorious in the fore-castle that Mr. Jones thought himself rather a large man than otherwise.

Lyte was urgently impelled to retort, 'Then how—the unmentionable—is the wheat to be shifted, and this horrible *list to starboard* to be got rid of?' but abstained.

Mr. Jones and the carpenter set

to work with their huge wooden shovels, at first immediately under the hatchway, and burrowed down a little way; but presently, afraid of blocking up their own space for moving forward, Mr. Jones cried out, 'You must haul away up there, sir. We've hardly space to turn round as it is.'

'My God!' exclaimed the captain, evidently startled; but, recovering himself in a moment, added, 'Two of you bring buckets and lines at once, and give Mr. Jones some elbow-room down there.'

It was scarcely sooner said than done. Two of the deck buckets, attached by the handles to two strong Manilla cords, were brought and lowered alternately, one being hauled up and emptied overboard while the other was being lowered and filled. But while the two willing hands had gone for the pails, Lyte heard one of the croakers say, 'There was room enough and to spare when we put the lower hatch on in port. It's swelled from below, by —.'

Whereupon Mr. Crays, stooping over the hatchway with his hanging lantern, turned upon the speaker with such a withering look of contempt that he sneaked away abashed behind the two front ranks of his companions. That any man in the crew should be mean enough to try and depress their spirits prematurely seemed to Mr. Crays a dastardly act, besides being an infringement of discipline and marine courtesy.

'The man spoke thoughtlessly, Mr. Crays. Hoist away there, my lads,' cried the captain cheerily, with another of those touches of tenderness which Lyte had perceived in his character. This little word of compassion worked like magic in the crew. The buckets were hoisted up, hand over hand, passed from one to another, emptied

overboard, and lowered again as fast as they could be filled. Not so easy a task, when we remember that the main-deck was wholly exposed, the bulwarks, etc., having been swept away, and the ship leaning fearfully on one side.

Before ten minutes had passed a considerable depth was reached. 'Dry as dust down here, sir,' roared Mr. Jones, whose prodigious voice would have led a stranger to look for a Saxon giant instead of a diminutive navigator of Celtic origin.

'Work away a little to starboard!' cried the captain, more cheerfully.

'Half choked, sir!' shrieked the mate, in a sudden falsetto, proceeding to sneeze and expectorate.

'Come up, then, and look sharp about it,' replied the skipper. 'And, carpenter, take two men and get your lights up quickly. Now, boatswain and Mr. Lyte! Plenty of room for you big fellows. Go and drive a passage right through to starboard, and send it all up. We must have space down there, and it has evidently shifted somewhat aft.'

So the two half-choked men came up, and the two candidates for suffocation went down. At it they went, working into the compact mass on the right; and by the time that lights were in the foremast-head and the rigging on either side, the 'bulk wheat' in the hold was pronounced to be dry right through from top to bottom, from port to starboard, and the 'Adriatic' free from all suspicion of a leak.

A great cheer for the good ship burst spontaneously from the crew; another for the captain, and another for Mr. Lyte, who was 'fit to be a seamen, every inch of him,' as the sailors generously admitted.

'And now, my lads, what say you?' asked the skipper. 'Bring

three more lanterns on the poop nigh to the binnacle, so that the men at the wheel may join us, and we will read the burial service at the gangway over our three lost comrades. Good men and true they were. Then all hands to the capstan to grog, and to-morrow we'll right the good ship "Adriatic."'

A deep murmur of applause broke forth as honestly as the cheers had done. Whether the astute skipper had added a touch of popularity to his pious proposal by the suggestion of grog after prayers is not for this chronicler to question; but certain it is that this truly religious service for the dead was celebrated not only without levity, but with some groans, many tears, and much reverence.

While the men were in the act of dispersing after their grog, a cry of 'Sail on the lee bow!' ran along the decks. Strange as it will seem to those who read this sequel, it was the passenger who first gave the notice. When all hands (except Mr. Crays, who remained at the wheel) repaired to the capstan on the quarter-deck, after all had been some minutes at their devotions, Lyte, bethinking himself of the look-out and the pleasures of a secluded pipe, made his way to the forecabin. No sooner had his sight accustomed itself to the misty light of the moon, rising in a clear white fog, than he became conscious of a large moving object apparently not more than five hundred yards distant. His notice was soon taken up by a dozen voices, and ran from prow to poop; and before long he followed his own information, feeling an intense interest in the strange vessel, and being anxious to see what measures the captain would take with regard to her.

Telescopes and flag signals were

useless in the doubtful light; but when the stranger saw the 'Adriatic,' she fired off five rockets in succession as a signal of distress, but kept on running before the wind, only reducing her sail so as to let the 'Adriatic' come alongside. The latter was keeping the wind about four points on her starboard quarter, to counteract in some measure her inclination to that side, so that she was bearing right down upon the stranger, drawing nearer to her every moment, as the moon rose higher above the mist, and revealed them more clearly to each other. They were both forging fast through the water, so M'Leod took in his foresail, that he might come up with the other more easily.

Mr. Jones was on the forecandle with one trumpet, and special orders to speak first, M'Leod on the poop with another trumpet, and Lyte at his side, Mr. Crays steering, and all the rest of the crew in the lee rigging. 'What do you make her out to be, Lyte?' asked the captain.

'A steamer in distress, running before the wind because she can't help herself,' replied the passenger, without hesitation.

'You're right, too. You ought to have been a seaman, as the men say.'

'I feel a terrible interest in her,' said Lyte.

'That's quite another matter. I don't,' retorted the captain. 'In another two or three minutes you'll be asking me to lower a boat and lose another four men out of my crew, to try and bring some women on board at night, and with this heavy sea running, and only to drown the women after all.'

'It's a beautiful night,' pleaded the passenger; as indeed it was, with a strong fair breeze, and the moon shining more brightly every minute.

'I tell you a boat would be capsized in this sea before you could get her away from the ship's side,' answered M'Leod.

Lyte was resolved not to provoke him by argument at a moment so critical to the fate of many persons. So he merely replied, shortly, 'I suppose you know best.' But it had not escaped his keen observation both that M'Leod thought the strange ship to be in danger, and that he was harassed with a slight doubt as to the extent of the duty toward those on board.

'She may not be in danger, after all?' he said, as a feeler.

But M'Leod answered, contemptuously: 'Large steamships don't scud before the wind under canvas only, and let off displays of fireworks for fun whenever a sail overhauls them. I see some ladies on the poop, and look at the people swarming like bees in the rigging and on the forecandle. I fancy she's an emigrant ship outward bound, with her screw damaged, and perhaps her rudder too, and driven out of her course. How awkwardly they steer! Why, she's standing across our bow as if she wanted us to sink her. Bring her up a point or two, Mr. Crays! Keep your eye on that strange craft, and take us within speaking distance, but give her an easy berth. Use your own judgment when I'm busy.'

'Would Muster Lyte lend I a hand?'

Pleased at the distinction, the landsman immediately took his station on the platform beside Mr. Crays, where their two tall, powerful forms stood out in bold relief at the helm of the huge ship, and appeared to the gaze of many an anxious spectator on board the disabled steamboat like the twin deities to the fainting Romans at the battle of Lake Regillus. It happened also that both the men

wore rough dark pilot coats and pantaloons, and were in all external respects singularly alike, except that the amateur sailor wore an old blue flannel cap, and the professional one a black cap with a gilt band round it.

'We shall forge ahead too fast for her. Boatwain, down with the main try-sail!' cried the skipper.

The unfortunate steamship, seeing them shortening sail, now imitated this measure, but lowered a much larger sail in proportion to hersize than the 'Adriatic's' main try-sail, in consequence of which the latter was going through the water much faster than the former when she overhauled her.

As though to compensate for the brevity of this personal maritime interview, Mr. Crays (assisted by Lyte) steered the 'Adriatic' with such skill that you might almost have thrown a ship's biscuit from one deck on to the other.

'Ship a-hoi-oi-oi!' roared little Mr. Jones from the forecastle, as soon as he came abreast of the steamer's poop. You would have thought from the noise he made that the unfortunate vessel was disappearing on the horizon.

In reply to this Boanerges, Lyte distinctly heard the silvery laughter of young women on the strange poop. How it thrilled through him, and reminded him of the gently flowing Peddle, and the nymphs whose laughter had made music on its rippling surface! He turned his head a little from the people in misfortune, whom he was powerless to assist, but listened acutely.

The strange captain was on a narrow gallery which ran from the poop to the top of a roundhouse on the main-deck, and so on the forecastle. As the 'Adriatic' passed him he moved along this gallery, taking no notice of Boan-

erges, but speaking rapidly and distinctly, though with a German accent, to Captain M'Leod; thus he kept up the colloquy at last from the very bow of his vessel, having commenced it nearly on the poop.

'This is the 'Hanseatica,' bound from Bremen to New York, touching at Southampton. We are nine days out. We have sprung a leak; have twelve feet of water in the vessel. It is gaining every hour. The screw is broken. And the rudder is so loose the ship will only go straight before the wind.'

All this he got through distinctly, and with every word audible, by the time that the poop of the 'Adriatic' had reached his roundhouse. Then he paused with a polite gesture, hoping that in such an extremity the Englishman would offer to take him and his company on board.

'Curse the Dutch idiot!' muttered M'Leod between his teeth. Then spoke loud and harshly: 'We are dismasted, as you see, and have thrown half a valuable cargo overboard, and now have to shift our lower-deck cargo. All our water is washed overboard, except a little in the iron tank; and our bulwarks and cook's galley, as you see. Moreover, three of the best men in my crew were washed off the poop and drowned.'

'Mein Gott! I am sorry,' cried the courteous German, who must indeed have been sorry at this useless tirade, while the 'Adriatic' was rushing past, and he was already at his last footing on the prow of his sinking ship.

'Will you not at the least take our ladies on to your ship?' he screamed.

'Send 'em,' roared M'Leod.

'I cannot. Mein Gott! I cannot. Both my quarter-boats is washed away.'

'Jolly-boat!' shouted M'Leod,

pointing with his brass trumpet to a huge boat which was suspended upside down over the fore hatch.

'It is broke in many bits. *It is rotten!*' screamed the German, as he stood alone on his black prow, wringing his hands, and looking a very impersonation of helpless agony.

The 'Adriatic' was now fast forging ahead.

A yell of anguish and dismay, shrill enough to split the welkin, and piercing the ear like poisoned arrows, arose from the decks of the doomed steamship.

'By the God that made me, Mr. M'Leod, I for one can't stand this!' Lyte said, calmly relinquishing the wheel to Mr. Crays, and flinging off his coat.

'What do you propose to do, sir?' M'Leod asked sternly.

'What *can* I do?' asked Lyte, half frenzied. 'I can go and die with them, if I can't help them to keep their pumps at work till they fall in with a ship commanded by a man with a human heart. Anyhow, I am going to swim off to them at once. I should blush to step on English ground if I left those foreigners to die like kittens.'

'That vessel will sink to-morrow between ten o'clock and noon,' M'Leod coolly replied.

'Then I'll sink with them; and may our blood be on your head and on the head of your wife and child, you unmanly man! Good-bye, Mr. Crays. Here goes!'

And having by this time kicked off his boots, away he flew like an arrow into the boiling surge, cleaving the sea before his head with pointed fingers; and rising again some yards away, he turned and swam with the sea, merely uttering a shout now and then when soaring at the top of a wave—an old cry which he remembered being used by the German sailors at Hamburg and Bremen. Of

course he had no intention of swimming any distance, knowing well that the crew of the 'Hanseatika' had seen his plunge, and would bring the vessel near him and fling him ropes, perhaps with a life-buoy attached.

The astonishment of M'Leod was literally boundless. Up to the very moment when his guest flew off the taffrail, he believed that Lyte was merely acting a part to coerce him into lowering a boat that night against his own judgment. Being an obstinate Briton, he chose not to be coerced, but would have endeavoured to restrain Lyte from such a rash act, had he really credited his intention. First he would have told him (what was simple truth) that he had not the least intention to desert the forlorn 'Hanseatika,' but that, arguing from her captain's statement that she would float till noon to-morrow, he had resolved to take her passengers and crew off to-morrow shortly after daybreak, unless in the meantime a vessel bound westward should come upon the scene, and so do some of them a still greater service by taking them to America. This was the more prudent plan also in behalf of his own crew, as the sea was abating every hour, and the labour would probably be unattended with danger to-morrow; also in behalf of the owners of the steamship, as it would be more easy for them to secure the insurance moneys from the underwriters if it could be proved that she was actually about to founder when deserted. Then, if his headstrong guest had refused to listen to reason, M'Leod was not sure but what he might have yielded, and let the obstinate fellow take the life-boat and the boatswain and four volunteers, and go and fetch the ladies. But no men or low trollopes of women

would he have on board till he had made arrangements for stowing them away where the clocks had been.

Now, however, he did not hesitate for

Bedford Lyte. Even in this last alteration Lyte had enhanced this regard, not using a single coarse or mean expression, and nobly abstaining from claim-



an instant. In less time than it has cost me to explain his negative conduct, the skipper had proved his activity and the sincere regard which he had acquired for

ing service on the score of the tremendous service which he had rendered to the ship and all on board of her.

In less than five minutes the life-

boat, with the four best men as oarsmen, and Mr. Crays as coxswain, and the boatswain in the bows, was cleaving the moonlit waves. The 'Adriatic' had shortened sail, and was dodging to and fro warily with men on the lookout all over her rigging. The 'Hanseatica' had tried to pick up the swimmer, and failed, owing to her defective rudder; but as he was beginning to wish for his cork jacket while swimming in her wake, and hoping she would throw him a life-buoy, oars came splashing up; a coil of line was chucked before his face; he laid hold, drew it short, and was pulled under the gunwale of the 'Adriatic's' life-boat. Two stalwart arms were protruded, he made a spring upward with all his might, and they caught him under the armpits and hauled him in.

'How be you, Muster Lyte?' asked Mr. Crays.

'Jolly, thank you, Crays. I began to feel tired, though, when you came up. It's awkward swimming in a sea with these clothes on.'

'You are to drink this now, sir.' (*This was whisky and bitters.*) So he drank it without making any wry faces, and then *did* begin to feel jolly.

'Now thank you all, my merry, merry men,' he cried. 'But easy, lads, easy! Where are you rowing to? I'm going on board the —what's her name? You don't think I took that header for nothing.'

'We be to put you on board of she, and leave you there for the night, or to fetch off the saloon ladies to the 'Adriatic,' or to take you back as we be, whichever you do choose, Muster Lyte,' said Crays categorically.

'I vote for fetching off the ladies,' said Lyte; 'but, in that case, how about the rest of this

ship's company, passengers and all?'

'Why, Muster Lyte!' exclaimed Crays reproachfully, 'you didn't go for to think that our skipper, whom we've sailed with this thirteen voyages or more, was going to leave all them poor creeters to perish. He know'd about how long the lob-sided old thing would float. He wanted to hold off and on till daylight, and then fetch 'em off comfortable when this sea had gone down a bit more. It's well enough now when you be at sea, but it's orkard alongside o' ships, partickler at night.'

After this oration Lyte paused, and then said: 'I see I have done our good captain wrong in thinking he was going to desert these foreigners. But I'll give 5*l.* apiece to every man in this boat's crew for saving me from drowning (which you've done, lads, and no mistake), and 5*l.* apiece to each if you'll come now and fetch off the ladies from the 'Hanseatica.'

'Hooroar! hooroar!' they shouted; and again the life-boat danced over the waves, and soon drew alongside the lee of the steamship, which contrived to luff up a few points in order to make a lee-side protection of the gallant little boat. Only Mr. Crays and Mr. Lyte went on board, the latter of whom the captain, Overbeck, received at the gangway, and clasping the dripping hero in his arms, squeezed the water out of his scanty garments, and poured words of gratitude and devotion into his ears. He had seen the dispute on the retiring poop of the great ship; had seen the gallant plunge, and heard the swimmer's German shouts from the summit of the waves. He had endeavoured with his own hands to cast lines to the swimmer as the 'Hanseatica' passed him in its wayward course, and was in the

act of lashing together some spars to be cast astern for his support, when the life-boat appeared rowing straight to the scene of his struggles. This good man insisted upon taking Lyte into the round-house, and clothing him in dry garments from his own chest, before he would conduct him to the saloon. Meanwhile he sent to the ladies, requesting them to hasten their preparations for departure, and promising himself to bring any valuables which they might have to leave in his own box to the 'Adriatic' on the following morning. 'For me,' he said to Lyte, 'if I am permitted to bring a few articles for those charming young creatures, my own chronometers and sextants and half-a-dozen shirts, I am more than satisfied. You are my benefactor, and your captain is not so hard of heart as I thought him to be. Oh, it is too terrible to think that he might have sailed away had you not plunged into the mighty ocean!'

On board the poor crippled, helpless steamship an absolute panic had prevailed for a few minutes among the passengers and crew when the 'Adriatic' forged ahead without any apparent intention of rescuing them from their fate. All their four seaworthy boats had been carried away or dashed to pieces by the fury of the sea. Even upon the poor old inverted jolly-boat a topmast had fallen and staved it in. The other topmasts were overboard, the rudder was half torn from the stern-post, the engines were wholly incapacitated for work, and, worse than all, the ship had sprung a fearful leak, and the steam-pump being unavailable, it was found impossible to prevent the water from gaining upon them every hour, though one gang relieved another without cessation

at the hand-pumps. Even without further accident (and to what chances and risks were they not exposed?) it was scarcely possible to keep the ship afloat another twenty-four hours.

The crew consisted of thirty-two hands, all told. There were some seventy-five steerage passengers on board, men, women, and children—Germans and Danes. In the saloon were two German gentlemen, merchants, and an Englishman escorting his wife and her two sisters. Only the latter group and the superior officers of the vessel were allowed on the poop-deck. They (the cabin passengers) sat there while the 'Adriatic' was careering past them. She was for about a minute not more than fifty yards distant. Only one short, thickset, fierce man, with a brass trumpet in his hand, stood at the taffrail of her poop. He wore a maroon worsted jack, like the bar-keeper in a London gin-palace. This was Captain M'Leod. Behind him stood two broad-shouldered splendid men, looking like twins, and taller even than they were from the little elevation of the platform on which they stood to turn the wheel. The only peculiarity about either of these two was a faded blue flannel cap which one wore; but his back was turned upon the steamship.

The two Germans sat pale and mute, but gazing with agony at the 'Adriatic.' The Englishman, a fine, tall, bearded soldier, rose and waved his undress military cap. 'Help! help! you Englishmen; for the love of God! You won't leave women to sink in this cursed ocean. Help!' But the wind swept his words away, and the two captains, bawling at each other through their speaking-trumpets, overbore the sound of his voice. Seeing that he had

spoken in vain, and hurt as much at the hardness of the hearts that could resist such an appeal, as at the fate impending over his charge, he looked down at his beautiful young wife with a face upon which despair was slowly creeping. A smile was only fading out of her bright young face. She and her younger sister were not old enough to appreciate danger. They had just been laughing at Mr. Jones's stentorian greeting. The elder sister, who was going 'out' to meet her husband, seemed more sad and indifferent to good or evil, than frightened.

No sooner had the 'Adriatic' passed them fairly than the expression of the Englishman's face underwent another change, which his wife quickly discerned. 'Why, George, dear, what has happened now? Are we all going up to heaven in a balloon? Tell me quickly. Nothing can surprise me any more.'

'Nelly, my love! Janet! Don't you see him?' he said, pointing ecstatically to the stern of the 'Adriatic.' They turned instantly, and gazed with wide-open blue eyes and envious black curling lashes.

'Don't you see him, my darlings? It's Lyte! It's my dear old Bedford, the truest man and best friend in the world. Don't you know his cap, the old university blue, in which he won every race he rowed? Look at him. He has left the wheel. He's pitching into that brute of a skipper in the tapster's jacket and the penny trumpet. He's taking his coat off. See! can't you see, girls? He's going to thrash him. Won't he give it him! that's all.'

The two German gentlemen, who were not familiarly acquainted with English vernacular, could not quite follow Captain Fuller's free and easy diction; but being highly

interested in his sudden hilarity, and charmed with any prospect of a change, to which they thought this source of interest might conduce, came and craned over the taffrail, staring also with wide blue eyes at the dumb show on the poop of the retreating ship.

Janet's heart leaped and bounded within her so furiously, or rather so gleefully, that she had much ado not to leap overboard herself. 'Hold me tight, Nelly,' she exclaimed. 'Blanche, dear, you hold me tight on this side. Don't let me jump over into the horrid sea. I can't quite see him, my eyes are so full of tears. I am crying for joy. It is my "Sir," you know, Nelly, my own "Sir." Is it really *him*? Is that his old broad back turned to us, with no coat on and a blue shirt? I remember his broad back in church. They won't let him jump into this nasty rough sea to come to me, will they? But he taught Berty to swim. *He* can swim. He can do everything. You know he can, Nelly. And why don't you say so? *Every* thing!' Thus the innocent prattled in her joyous bewilderment, while Bedford Lyte was waging his hot and hasty war of words with M'Leod.

Presently Fuller started, seeing his friend apparently mounting the rail for that headlong and fearful plunge into the mighty sea. 'Look at him! Was there ever such a trump? He is going to swim off to us.'

'A trump! Vas is das?' remarked the Hamburger. 'Perhaps das is Herr Van Tromp!'

'Hullo! There he goes! Hurrah! God bless him! Was there ever such a good pluck'd one? Eh, mein herr? What do you think of that? That's the way an Englishman bathes — likes deep water and plenty of sea-room.'

But Janet was frightened now,

and well she might be; for, remember, this was transacted by moonlight, and if an envious cloud or mist had obscured that luminary, both ships would inevitably have lost sight of the solitary swimmer. Even in her full effulgence none but the most daring and powerful swimmer could venture on such a plunge into such a sea. Yet, as some men have dived from the yard-arm of a full-rigged ship, the feat was far from singular.

The ships, as yet, were not very far apart; and at first it seemed easy enough to steer the 'Hanseatica' two points out of her course to pass close to the swimmer, drop him a noosed rope to slip under his arms, and so lift him on to the deck. In order to make sure of his new friend, Captain Overbeck took in yet another large sail, which reduced the pace of her progress by one-third. Alas! shortly after this was done, and they had arrived almost abreast of poor Bedford, they found that the vessel had lost all steerage-way from the slowness of her movement, and were unable to force her near enough to assist their benefactor. But while their futile efforts were being made a joyous sight greeted Fuller's eyes.

'I told you so, girls!' he exclaimed, though he had omitted to tell them anything of the kind. 'Look, there comes the life-boat! A beauty she is, too, and well manned. I thought the bold buccaneer would be afraid to let Lyte drown. His college would have come down upon the skipper, and had him hanged. You can't drown a man of that stamp like a poor devil of a Dutch emigrant. See how splendidly they steer—right toward him!'

'Why do they twist about so, then?' asked poor little Janet, who was picking up a little courage now that she saw a fine handsome

boat rowed by four men, steered by a giant, and with an amphibious monster in the bows, sent out on purpose to pick the gentleman up after his moonlight bath. She thought no longer of their own peril, but of his, and expected to see the boat going straight as an arrow, or a skiff on the placid river Peddle.

Fuller explained to her that it was necessary to meet each roller as it approached with the pointed bow of the boat. All she cared about just now was 'Sir's' safety; and lo! now it was secured. She could see him distinctly drinking something out of a flask, then, after the oars had all been still a while, a loud hurrah! and then the boat came dancing over the waves towards the 'Hanseatica.' She hid her face in her hands and listened. There once more were the well-remembered sounds, the swing, the pulse, the splash of unseen oars, coming to her from the unseen world, bringing life and joy to her heart, bringing her lover, who was come, having risked his own life to save hers, to make her one with him, and keep her safely for ever. Yes, he did love her still. She could not, would not doubt it.

Now, while Bedford was being dressed by Captain Overbeck, Fuller ascertained from Mr. Crays that he had no anticipation of finding any friends on board this ill-starred ship, and that he expected to find none but Germans in the Bremen steamer. So they agreed to hide and let him see Janet first alone. Fuller knocked at the captain's door, and whispered a communication which induced that officer to withdraw at the door of the saloon. Finding himself alone there, and the state-room doors around all closed, he called out, 'Ladies, please not to be longer than you can help.'

Then a door at his elbow was opened, and Janet was standing alone in the doorway. She wore only a plain black velvet frock. But her eyes were dancing with the light of love. Her lips were just parted, like the carmine petals of a fuchsia, disclosing a milk-white calyx underneath. There still hovered about her a fragrance of dewy rose-leaves, and her glorious hair was massed in all its profusion on her comely head.

'Am I dreaming?' he asked.

There were two lamps hanging up over the table in the middle of the saloon. One of these threw a subdued light upon her, and she assuredly was a real woman—really his own Janet, only grown far more beautiful than his imagination had pictured her in its wildest dream.

'Are you really Janet?' he asked.

There was something so revelent in his admiration for her beauty that it consoled her for the disappointment of finding that he had not come solely or specially to rescue her.

'Did not you know I was here, Sir?' she asked timidly.

It was the first time she had ever called him 'Sir.'

'I had much less hope of seeing you than of being in Paradise to-day, dear. Indeed, this is a foretaste of Paradise, seeing you again after so many years. I never used to speak to you like that in the old days; and now that I would do so, perhaps you will not let me.'

'You took away my dear old Gamp, you know,' she replied archly. 'And it is not *me* you have come to save to-night.' So saying, she peeped up slyly at his puzzled face.

'I cannot honestly say it was, dear,' he urged, with provoking conscientiousness. 'Yet I felt

strangely drawn towards this vessel, and I fancied I heard you laugh when little Boanerges hailed it. I could not look toward the deck when I thought I could not help the people on it; but in two minutes I had determined to help them, or die in the attempt.'

He saw nothing of her now but her golden hair glistening in the light of the dim lamp. It almost touched his breast as she stooped and murmured, lowly, 'Do you love—me—Sir?'

'Look at me, darling,' he said, clasping both his arms round her little waist.

'I'm afraid,' she whispered. 'Oh, no, I'm not. There!' and lifting her face, she looked modestly and sweetly into his 'dear sad eyes,' as she used to call them.

'Do I love you?' he repeated.

'Well, dear, I have loved you so truly and so intensely for five or six years that I may honestly say this most blessed moment is the climax of every moment of time for all those years. But may I hope that you will forgive me all my harshness, and that you will love me a little?'

'I want to be your little wife,' she whispered.

Then he at last, after so many years of waiting, of self-denial, self-control, and resignation, yielded to that impulse which is common to all men so situated. Nor did she affect a false modesty, but allowed him to feel that she considered herself in a manner his already. She knew the man so well at length, his honour, loyalty, and integrity, that she already experienced the repose of love. She could lean upon him in all things, or, if need be, could lie in his arms like an infant. He was strong enough physically, intellectually, and morally for her

to repose in him with a perfect trust.

'What in the world were you going to New York for?' he asked her, as they returned to the 'Adriatic.'

'To find my Sir, and give him back his fortune,' she saucily said.

'Or?' he urged,

'Or his little girl.'

* * * * *

Thus the formal courtship of Janet Browne and Bedford Lyte was, after all, of brief duration, and under disadvantageous circumstances, yet was it perhaps as pregnant with joy as many elaborate and luxurious wooings.

Instead of proceeding to Canada by way of New York, Captain and Mrs. Fuller returned to their sister's wedding, which took place at the rectangular 'dry-dock' church in the ensuing March. Having thus had more time to think of his future plans, and a deep repugnance to subjecting his wife a second time to the terrors of the ocean, Fuller sold out of the regiment in Canada into which he had exchanged, and took his wife to live at his own place in Oxfordshire, where Bedford and his wife often visit them. The old proverb that 'It's an ill wind which blows nobody good' was curiously exemplified, as we have seen, in the case of the 'Hanseatica's' loss, and the gain which accrued to Nelly and Janet. It also proved a benefit to poor Mrs. George Baily, who received letters in England informing her that her husband had died in New York rather before the date on which she had expected to arrive.

The poor little English tomtit fulfilled its last mission in obliging its master to cross the Atlantic in a ship which was destined to rescue his bride from a watery grave.

It only survived until the night before the wedding, when, at midnight, while roosting on the rail at the foot of Lyte's bed, it suddenly, and contrary to custom, lowered its second leg, grasped the rail with both, and finding its hold to slacken even so, fluttered to Bedford's pillow, and died in the hand that projected from under his drowsy head. Thus did Janet lose her last surviving rival to 'Sir's' affections.

Mr. Browne still thrives at Pedlington in a green old age. His gentle wife still watches over him and all her scattered brood with unflinching tenderness. Frank, who as yet has been too fastidious to marry, devotes much of his superfluous energy to tormenting sister Joan, who is developing the fruit of an acidulated temper on the apex of her Roman nose. Albert has withdrawn to a seclusion in the cheerful village of Tiddenden, where he reads melancholy effusions, and endeavours to relieve the firm of his annuity by perilous evolutions on (and off) a bicycle.

We may conclude this simple chronicle by remarking that about a year after the marriage of Mr. and Mrs. Bedford Lyte, the former's only relative died, and, to recompense him for previous injuries, left him an ample property, saddled with the condition that he should invest 12,000*l.* or 13,000*l.* in land. He therefore purchased a pretty cottage and model farm on the Thames, near his friend Captain Fuller; and Blanche, until her second marriage, with Maynard Martin, Esq., of Plumstead Manor, in Kent (her junior, some say), used to divide her time chiefly between Mrs. Fuller, of Watermead, and Mrs. Bedford Lyte, of Abbey Cottage.

A STUDIO PARTY.

WHAT a pleasant party it was! One of many, truly, but, being the last of a series, seeming to be the best; just as to some people the last pleasant thing is always the best—the last fruit we taste, the last song we hear, the last advice we get. And so now it is the last studio party that is uppermost is the best. What a genial lot of fellows were assembled! How the whole atmosphere rang with mirth and laughter, with joke-cracking, keen intelligent talk, and bright wit! How the arguments waged here and there, with admirable temper, were listened to and backed by each set of partisans—arguments on subjects full of vital interest, artistic, literary, essentially humanising and elevating, making the ordinary tittle-tattle about people and their doings sound as if it came from the bills of geese, rather than from the lips of men; showing, it may be, why the *true* artist, of whatever denomination, is oftentimes so intolerant of inartistic society, and why he clings so pertinaciously to his kind: why the Bohemian in him must always crop out a little more or less, excusing it even when it is more, much more than it should be. The sympathy which is as essential to his existence, as water to a fish, being absent, he naturally kicks and plunges, outrages, may be, and contemns those who give it him not.

Take yonder gay, bright, genial old Jack Dolman as an example. A true Bohemian with very simple tastes, and able to make himself at home in any society if it yield but one whiff of the afflatus, which is his meat and drink; a perfect gentleman, independent and outspoken—blatant at times, and causing unaccustomed eyes to open

wide and jaws to drop a little. Listen to him, as he descants upon a picture in progress standing upon an easel. Not a word of praise, save where praise is due; no conventional politeness because it is the work of a dear friend, or a noble lord, but plenty of discriminating admiration for the finest points—ready good-natured fun for the weak ones, and monstrous sarcastic humour on occasions, if the chaff be taken up and turned towards himself.

'See here, old fellow! You must alter her nose—it is not sufficiently classical at present. Because it pleased Heaven to give your model the first that *turned up*—"tip-tilted, like the petal of a flower," as Tennyson has it—you need not make Corinna snub!'

Then, as the quiet chuckle or the hearty laugh goes up through the blue wreaths of the fragrant smoke, filling the air, he applauds earnestly the colour, or the drawing, or the any-something on the canvas that touches him home. Look, too, at Jack Dolman himself, with his clean-shaven cheeks and chin; short, thick, curly silver hair and heavy moustache to match; clear grey eyes, well-chiselled features, and bronzed skin. Look at his broad shoulders, stalwart figure (five feet eleven), at his sinewy, nervous hands, at his loose velvetene garb, and swinging walk and motion; and you say 'distinguished!' and wonder how old he can be. You know of what family he comes, and judge he must be much older than he looks, despite the silver aforesaid, which may be remembered in its present state these twenty years past, and when it could have had no reference to his birthday. You are puzzled, and think he may be any

age. You give your speculations, words, in the ear of the tall cigarette-smoking swell in evening dress, one of his intimates, and a capital amateur artist to boot, who, smiling, replies, 'Dolman? Oh! he must be over eighty. Eh?' (*to the man himself*) 'is it not so, dear old boy? You are. Now, come, confess you are over eighty?'

Jack meets the chaff, as he takes his pipe from his mouth, with as good a *mot* as he ever uttered:

'Over eighty? Oh, yes, I confess, I have often been over-(eighty-ed) rated!'

There are one or two of his works about the rooms, some *swaps*, using studio parlance, it may be, or lent for this especial evening to add to its art attractions. These will show Dolman's versatility, and explain how it is that he has never been quite the successful man with his brush that he ought to be. The public demands a line, a special line, and also, that a man, having chalked it out, should stick to it. The public resents, save in rare cases, a landscape by a portrait painter, or *vice versâ*, and usually demands the artist's blood, if he unexpectedly betrays a talent for historical episodes. And so Jack Dolman has suffered in pocket from now doing *trayon* portraits, now studies from the life in oil, now water-colour sketches from nature, now copies from Gainsborough or Sir Joshua. But he has not suffered as a true artist; he is *that* to the back-bone; he will always paint what it pleases him to paint, and what he feels. This is what the public cannot forgive; but, as his brethren do, heartily, the veteran is quite happy and content. He has the gift of living in the present; it is his true source of happiness, and thus he can seldom be taken at a disadvantage. He gets as much enjoyment

out of mere existence, when smoking his pipe and looking over a gate into a field, as many people do in the midst of their most coveted pleasures. Nature, in her simplest moods, amply satisfies him; and in a country lane, or a London street, his keen eye will never miss a form, an effect, or a bit of colour which yields the slightest element of artistic beauty.

The entertainer of the evening—the owner of the studio? Well! *he* has not been unsuccessful—pretty plain *that*, as this glorious room, anterooms, and approaches sufficiently testify. Ample means and perfect taste have had their way here. Those carefully thought-out tints and colours, on walls, doors, *décorés*, cornices, and ceilings—those cabinets, chairs, and tables—those choice ebony-framed etchings, sketches, and pictures, panelled here and there, and intermixed with rare pottery and china—those curtains, rugs, and mats, selected with an eye to a completely harmonised variety; those innumerable objects of art abounding everywhere, on shelves and mantelpieces; those details of exquisite beauty carried through the whole—leave no doubt that our host has stuck to his line with a vengeance, and made it pay.

And his line? Well! say it is good art, and thoroughly warrants his success, albeit it is rather that of the designer and the colourist than the poet and the painter. He has had a struggle, but fifteen years of indomitable energy backed by capacity has brought him from a mean third floor in Fitzroy Street, with its clay pipes and pewter pots, to this present pass at Kensington—has brought him to be the entertainer and esteemed friend of some of the best talent and genius in London. And the talent and genius appreciate him the more on account of their having

passed through pretty similar ordeals. So that Miles Burnish, when he sends out invitations for a studio party, is sure to have them gleefully accepted. Everybody knows that he will meet there the people he most wishes to meet. The brush, the chisel, the pen, the orchestra, the stage, and even occasionally the pulpit, the bar, and the sword, are represented in force. The general enjoyment, of course, is largely due to that congenial atmosphere, which (tobacco apart) would take the breath out of the *habitué* of the merely so-called 'good society.'

Brain, lay or professional, is the passport of admission to these gatherings: the lay element is there to a considerable extent; for the accomplished amateur with many a handle to his name, and the lordly young stripling with more intellect than his class is usually accredited with, find, in the society of clever men for whose pursuits they have an inborn sympathy, a pleasant change from the vapid inanities but too common in those 'highest circles' in which they are supposed to move and have their being. These young scions of nobility, however, are thoroughly welcome, for one touch of art, equally with nature, 'makes the whole world akin!'

It is the eve of the Royal Academy Exhibition, and a few notable canvases, from the brushes of some of the host's closest allies, are standing about on easels in the studio, awaiting removal to Burlington House; and, long before the oysters and Chablis are announced, the talk runs high about their merits, and their probable fate at the hands of the Council. A portrait of a grey-bearded, massive-headed old man particularly attracts attention.

'Judged by the standard of the late Mr. Vandyke, it leaves a good

deal to be desired,' says little bald-pated Max Limner, in his most sarcastic tones, which, by-the-way, being high, slow, quaint, and clear, give all his utterances peculiar character and point; and now, as he refers to the hands in the picture, he urges that 'though the colour and execution are good, the drawing is very faulty.'

'Perhaps,' cuts in rosy-faced, portly old Dabbleton, a distinguished amateur; 'but colour and execution are worth something, and you seldom or ever find very accurate drawing going with them.' 'Precisely,' cries Limner; 'because, when you do, you find a very great painter; and a very great painter is a very rare being. That is what I intended to imply by my reference to Mr. Vandyke, of lamented memory; and I could point to one or two more like him, who have gone from amongst us—such as certain obscure professors by the names of Velasquez, Holbein, Hogarth, and one Reynolds, familiarly spoken of as Sir Joshua. They had the knack—yes, indeed!'

'Ah! there's little Max, finding fault as usual, and making odious comparisons,' whispers a drawling, suave, handsome, much-dressed gentleman, into Dabbleton's ear. 'Limner is really too hard upon the moderns; he has said one or two "doosid" uncivil things about my Gothic designs at Winterstowe, I can tell you. I know him—a selfish, disappointed little brute,' adds this eminent architect, as Dabbleton and he throw themselves into a seat, side by side.

'Disappointed, certainly,' replies Dabbleton, 'but not altogether so selfish as you would think. Now, I put it to you, my friend: there's Max Limner, hard upon sixty, has remained single all his life; lives by himself, and to himself; and is called by everybody a selfish old bachelor. Now I put

it to you, I say, which of the two is the more selfish, he, or his brother Ernest, who, at the age of twenty, and being in receipt of some fifty pounds a year, marries a girl without a penny, has ten children, one after another, as fast as he can, and then dies, and leaves Max to take care of the widow and family? Ernest never denied himself the pleasures of matrimony—not a bit of it: he did not allow any selfish thoughts for the future to interfere with his present enjoyment: there was no selfish caution about him! He must have a home and a family, and anybody may pay for the one, and keep the other. Poor Max is the “anybody”; and he, forsooth, because he cannot afford to marry in the face of such responsibilities, is called a selfish old bachelor! Damme! I have no patience with the world, and its cant on such points. We know nothing of each other—not one of us. Limner seems to you what he seems to many—an unrenowned portrait-painter, and a sayer of hard things; but, after what I have told you, you'll give him credit for a tender heart as well, I hope; and,' adds Dabbleton, as he finishes his somewhat oracular discourse, 'you must admit that, if he now and then says a severe thing, you never hear him say a stupid one!'

Lounging amidst the throng, these scraps of character and talk crop up, and one is puzzled to know which sense has the prior claim to attention, sight or hearing—for, be it said with all respect, the strangest and most eccentric-looking dogs abound. Clever fellows all, as we know; but how one longs that some of them would get their hair cut!

Yonder short, hatchety, pale-faced, thin, dark man lets it grow, lank and dank, almost to his shoulders, adding, in conjunction

with the single tuft on his chin, yards in effect to the length of his countenance, as if it were the presentment of the artist as seen in a spoon held upright! What wonder that the eminent caricaturist Spangarno, the little dark, lively, thick-set man who is observing him so closely, should probably reproduce him in a cartoon portrait when the painters of the period are dealt with by the dexterous pencil.

Again: yonder tall, broad-faced, snub-nosed, rubicund party wears his thick, sandy, dapple-grey hair brushed out all round his head, as if it had just been touzled in a hand-to-hand contest with the hook-nosed man he is talking to; and who, in his turn, appears to be trying to hide the results of the scrimmage which has cost him well-nigh all his locks, by bringing wisps of what is left of them at the back, across to the front, and securing them there by an imperfectly hidden piece of elastic.

Once more: that jockey-like little man, red, as the phrase goes, about the gills, is marvellous as to hair; for, fitting somewhat close to the sides of his head, it stands bolt upright on the top, suggesting utter defiance of any attempt to put a hat on, and as though its owner's intention was to add to his stature by the exaltation of his thatch. Each one seems bent on exaggerating his personal characteristics. Thin and narrow men do all they can to make themselves look thinner and narrower; broad, round men spread themselves out sideways by every possible contrivance. The spoon-portrait simile will apply to each and all, according to whether the domestic instrument be held horizontally or perpendicularly. The 'curled' locks are not entirely absent either, as that handsome, stout, slovenly,

velvet-coated old gentleman smoking the long china-bowled German pipe testifies; and (so strangely unconscious are we of there ever being anything peculiar in our own habits) he tells you placidly, as he blinks benignantly at the company, that 'it's a sad pity some of these chaps don't go to the barber!'

Old Sam Honeysett seems to be quite oblivious of the fact that Charles-the-First curls, hanging down to the neck, are conspicuous, and do not go well with nineteenth-century clothes. His own beard is as unkempt and ragged as a crow's nest; but he will say, with the utmost complacency, 'Good God! look at that fellow's beard; it hasn't had a comb through it for months. Such a pity to be so careless!' And, truly, in the matter of beards, as in hair, some of your artistic celebrities are open to comment. Being people who are supposed to have an especial eye for the beautiful, and who display the greatest taste in all matters appealing to the sight, it is strange how they occasionally lose no chance of disfiguring their own persons. They will wear the most ill-assorted colours, the worst-made clothes, and of the most unbecoming and unpractical cut, as though there were something derogatory and contemptible in conforming to customs which, if not exaggerated, are at least convenient, and set 'the human face and form divine' off to some advantage. Strange, too, that the contrasts which such a gathering as this affords do not strike them. Do they not see, for instance, what a far more pleasant exterior is presented (leaving good looks out of the question) by yonder upright, soldierly-looking personage, than by the man he is talking to? They are both in

evening dress, both equally well favoured by nature; but the one just takes decent care of himself, has his hair properly trimmed, his garments made to fit him easily, and, if he lounges, lounges like a gentleman; whilst the other evidently cuts his hair himself, if it ever be cut at all, slouches like a ploughboy, and apparently has been dressed by the same bucolic individual's tailor.

In the streets, or in the fields, the contrast would be equally strong, for the wonders in wide-awakes and inappropriate pea-jackets which, now and then, your artist yields to, are astounding. The soldier is not a fop, but the painter looks like a backwoodsman in town for a holiday. Of course we know he is a much cleverer fellow than his companion, who is only an able sketcher as well as warrior. Indeed, the artist is a very eminent man; but would he be one whit less so if, by the smallest expenditure of care, he avoided this disregard of personal appearance? He paints pictures full of the most delicate and subtle beauties, showing an intimate knowledge of costume and its appropriate accessories, its colour and its cut; his house is appointed, down to the minutest details, with the rarest regard to the gratification of the eye: why, therefore, in the name of all that is rational, should he not carry out these principles upon his own person, instead of flying directly in their face by making a veritable guy of himself?

Old Honeysett says, 'He looks like a foreman of works,' and that he 'expects every minute to see him pull a two-foot rule out of the seam pocket of his trousers.'

'Peter Dumpher began as a drawing-master, you know,' goes on Honeysett, 'but did not make much hand of it. His dress and

manners were against him. The young ladies declared that he never explained anything to them, but just went muddling on with his own sketch for a lesson, without a word; and, although the mammas and the governesses thought that he behaved very properly, and were not afraid of the girls falling in love with him, they didn't like the whiffs of tobacco hanging about his beard. Terrible nonsense, that teaching, after all! I tried it once, but I found I could only teach the people that could not learn; the clever ones could teach themselves. Terrible lot of humbug in drawing-mastering. The best artists are seldom the best masters; you want a gentlemanly, nice-looking chap with a good address—like Fillian, over there—more than a first-rate painter. Then he'll make lots of money by teaching.'

'After all, I am not sure there is greater humbug amongst the drawing-masters than the painters,' here breaks in little Limner. 'A hundred years hence, hardly one of the present men's names will be known; and long before that, I believe there will be a great explosion, and the heirs of the people who have given thousands of pounds for modern pictures will find them not worth as many shillings. There'll be a *burst-up*, sir! and very properly; and the only pity is that it won't leave behind a fatty stench or something to warn the future buyers. A parcel of untrained, inexperienced youngsters, not without talent perhaps, but requiring years for its developement, yet vamped up by a few mercenary dealers, and the press, and receiving preposterous prices for their earliest productions, cease to improve from that moment, and Mammon instead of Minerva becomes their idol ever after.'

'Talking about me, eh, Limner?'

here interposes a tall, broad-shouldered young giant, gentlemanlike and distinguished, and at the same time suggesting one of Alaric's Goths dressed by Poole.

Kindly and cheery is Gerald Bucanna, as his twinkling eye and boisterous yet good-natured laugh proclaim; Goth-like only in form and bearing, and with an overwhelming whirlwindish manner, recalling visions of invaded Italy.

'Well,' he adds, 'the dealers don't do much for me, whatever the press does. I have as fine a collection of my own works as any painter in England. I am the proud possessor of nearly everything I have exhibited during the last seven years; and I am twenty-seven to-day. Never mind! ha, ha! they'll see the error of their ways soon! Yes, this is my birthday,' he rattles on, 'and look, what I've had given to me. I shall wear it, it is just my form.'

Bucanna, who comes of a good family, and is a man of fortune, has, notwithstanding, all his life declared for the artist's career. He disdains the name of amateur, and works as diligently as if his bread depended on it. He is a great favourite everywhere, and a little knot of friends soon gathers round him to examine a gem of great antiquity, set in a massive gold ring, and which he is flourishing on the forefinger of his large right hand.

'What a beautiful thing!' interposes Sam Honeysett. 'Dear me! I wish I was only twenty-seven, and then perhaps I should have a present too!'

'Ah! so do I,' cries little Limner, 'for then perhaps I should have a future!'

The sally is acknowledged with laughter and cries of 'oh, oh!' whilst the shifting crowd brings into prominence other amusing elements.

One particularly claims attention through the ear, for the

strange appearance of some of the shining lights in the art world is now and then accompanied by strange sounds. Our dear, good friend Tarbox is disputing with a bystander the merit of a certain person's painting. The artist's name is inaudible, but the speaker says, 'Don't tell me, sir! I say 'ee'll never do anything worth a rap; the beggar's got no 'eart, and if ee's got no 'eart in 'is bosom, 'ow can 'ee put it on to canvas.'

Now, Tarbox may be a *self-educated* man, but educated and refined he certainly is; and yet he has no more notion of the use of the letter H than the commonest cockney. The thing is incredible, but it is true; and a glorious confusion of ideas in this instance seems to have gone along with confusion of sound. He is not the only instance of this peculiarity, either, in the room. More than once during the evening, it will be heard in other quarters; and one is set wondering as much by it as by the strange attire, unkempt hair and beards, and the rest of the artist affectations, vanities, and eccentricities.

What is it which renders men, who may be supposed to have achieved their greatness partly by the exercise of the faculty of observation, so singularly *un-observant* upon certain points? Highly gifted, refined, law-abiding, amiable citizens, who would as lief think of flying as of outraging the decencies and moralities of society, it is astounding (all affectations apart) to find them, here and there, making one wince by their systematic neglect of scissors, soap, and H's!

Quite exceptional, however, be it understood, are these instances of obtuse perversity. The bulk of the company at this studio party, as in the best artistic society generally, is made up of sufficiently

well-looking people to pass muster anywhere, whilst here and there stand out men as distinguished in their appearance as by what they have done, and can do, in art. There is Francis Blandwin to wit. He is in the first rank of painters, if not at their head; he is also an accomplished scholar and linguist, and yet he is equally renowned for his refined, gentlemanly bearing, and suave and charming manners. There again is Felix Spandril, who runs him hard at all points, and who is one of the most accomplished gentlemen as well as architects of the day. Indeed, it would be hard to find a handsomer, finer, or more thorough fellow in a day's march or a night's ramble.

Finally, and beyond all too, there is Mark Wheeler; and when he, with his tall figure, fine head, and frank, handsome, intellectually powerful countenance, is seen towering above his compeers, there is no question about the tone of this studio party; for, as surely as he is pre-eminently striking to look upon, so is he pre-eminently remarkable as a painter. Many other men of note might be quoted, as all-sufficient, the curmudgeons notwithstanding, to redeem the brethren of the brush and their kindred from ever being mistaken for the common herd.

What wonder, then, that the oysters and Chablis, the beer and the sandwiches, slip down with a gusto enhanced by the tone of the company, and, that later on, after cigars and pipes have been renewed, and music has, through the instrumentality and vocality of the rarely-gifted performers also present, 'soothed the savage breast' into a fit condition for sleep, the stroll homeward under the stars clenches the conviction that this studio party has been the best and jolliest upon record.

W. W. FENN.



一、關於「新中國」的定義

「新中國」一詞，在歷史上曾有過多次使用。在鴉片戰爭以前，中國人通常稱呼自己的國家為「中國」或「大清」，而外國人則稱呼為「中國」或「大清」。鴉片戰爭以後，中國人開始使用「新中國」一詞，以區別於舊中國。在當時，「新中國」通常是指一個現代化的、民主的、科學的國家。在五四運動時期，「新中國」一詞被廣泛使用，成為當時知識分子和青年學生的口頭禪。在當時，「新中國」通常是指一個民主的、科學的、進步的國家。在當時，「新中國」通常是指一個民主的、科學的、進步的國家。

二、關於「新中國」的構建

「新中國」的構建是一個長期的過程。在五四運動時期，知識分子和青年學生開始思考如何構建一個現代化的國家。他們認為，一個現代化的國家需要一個民主的憲政制度，需要一個科學的知識體系，需要一個進步的文化。在當時，「新中國」的構建是一個長期的過程。在五四運動時期，知識分子和青年學生開始思考如何構建一個現代化的國家。他們認為，一個現代化的國家需要一個民主的憲政制度，需要一個科學的知識體系，需要一個進步的文化。在當時，「新中國」的構建是一個長期的過程。在五四運動時期，知識分子和青年學生開始思考如何構建一個現代化的國家。他們認為，一個現代化的國家需要一個民主的憲政制度，需要一個科學的知識體系，需要一個進步的文化。

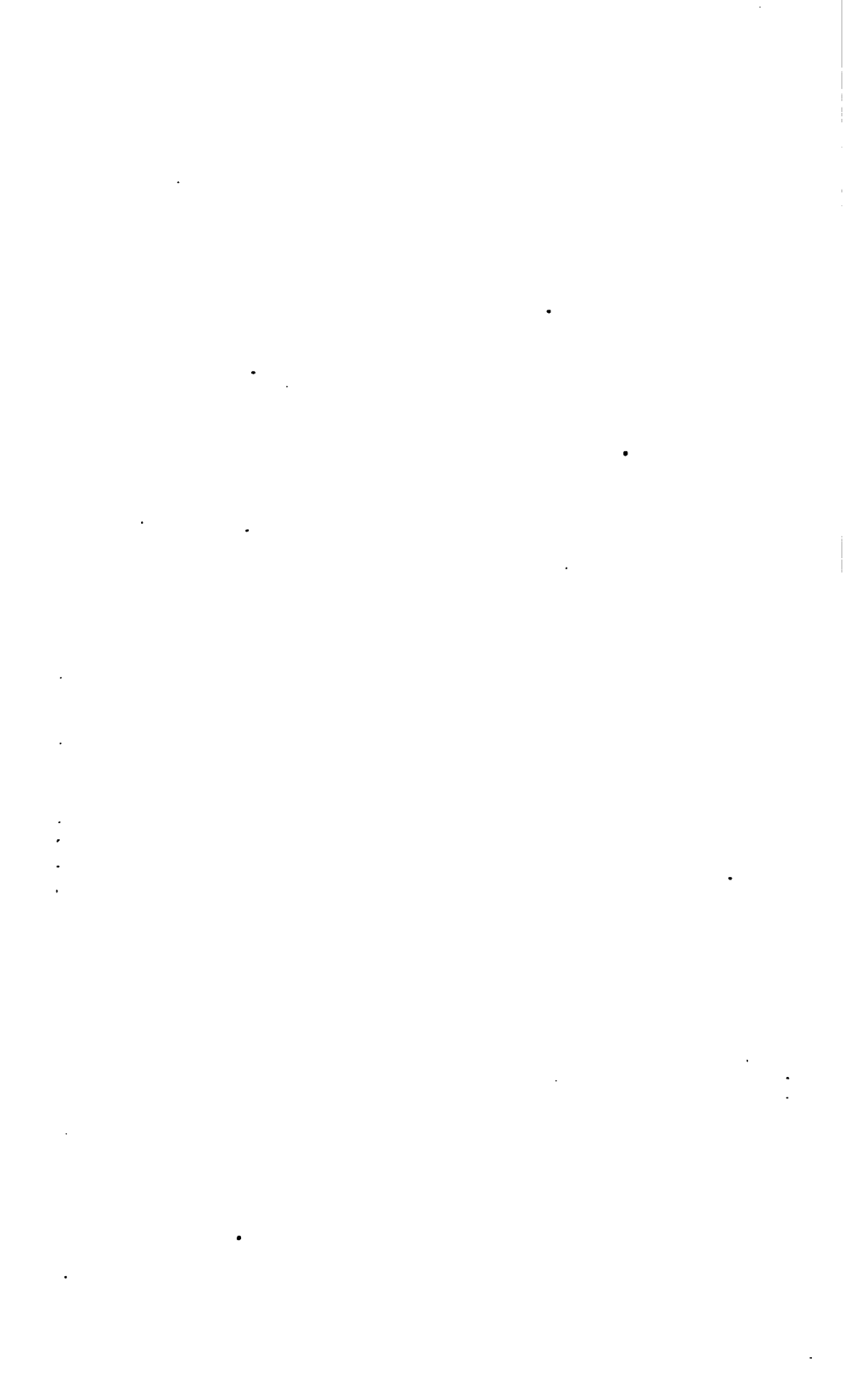
三、關於「新中國」的未來

「新中國」的未來是一個充滿希望的問題。在五四運動時期，知識分子和青年學生對「新中國」的未來充滿信心。他們認為，「新中國」的未來是一個民主的、科學的、進步的未來。在當時，「新中國」的未來是一個充滿希望的問題。在五四運動時期，知識分子和青年學生對「新中國」的未來充滿信心。他們認為，「新中國」的未來是一個民主的、科學的、進步的未來。在當時，「新中國」的未來是一個充滿希望的問題。在五四運動時期，知識分子和青年學生對「新中國」的未來充滿信心。他們認為，「新中國」的未來是一個民主的、科學的、進步的未來。



Drawn by J. W. McIntyre.]

AN EVENING IN SPRING.



GEORGE ELIOT IN DERBYSHIRE.

PART II.

‘OUR dear friends omitted inviting me to a class, which might have proved hurtful if the Lord had not blessed me with courage, for I knew not one Methodist in the town; but I asked a young woman if she knew where any Methodists lived. She said her father was one. I went and spoke to him concerning the Society. He invited me to go with him to the class. I went without hesitation, and felt it both my privilege and my duty.’

‘I had entirely done with the pleasures of the world, and with all my old companions. I saw it my duty to leave off all my superfluities of dress; hence I pulled off all my bunches—cut off my curls—left off my lace—and in this I found an unspeakable pleasure. I saw I could make a better use of my time and money than to follow the fashions of a vain world.’

It is well-known that Mr. Wesley wished the women of his society to dress after the fashion of the Society of Friends; and when old age came upon him, he regretted that he had not made it one of the conditions of membership. ‘But, alas!’ says he, ‘what can I do now?’ It would be well if modern Methodists would read his sermon on dress, and take a lesson from it. This part of the autobiography will also recall the effect on Bessy Cranage of Dinah’s preaching in ‘Adam Bede’ :—

[“Poor child! poor child! He is beseeching you, and you don’t listen to Him. You think of earrings, and fine gowns and caps, and you never think of the Saviour who died to save your precious soul. Your cheeks will be shrivelled one day, your hair will be grey, your poor body will be thin and tottering! Then you will begin to feel that your soul is not saved; then you will have to stand before God dressed in your sins, in your evil tempers and vain thoughts. And Jesus, who stands ready to help you now, won’t help you then; because you won’t have Him to be your Saviour, He will be your judge. Now He looks at you with love and mercy, and says, ‘Come to me that you may have life;’ then He will turn

away from you, and say, ‘Depart from me into everlasting fire.’”]

‘Poor Bessy’s wide-open black eyes began to fill with tears, her great red cheeks and lips became quite pale, and her face was distorted like a little child’s before a burst of crying.’

“Ah! poor blind child!” Dinah went on, “think if it should happen to you as it once happened to a servant of God in the days of her vanity. *She* thought of her lace caps, and saved all her money to buy ‘em; she thought nothing about how she might get a clean heart and a right spirit, she only wanted to have better lace than other girls. And one day, when she put her new cap on, and looked in the glass, she saw a bleeding Face crowned with thorns. That face is looking at you now;” here Dinah pointed to a spot close in front of Bessy. “Ah! tear off those follies! cast them away from you as if they were stinging adders. They are stinging you—they are poisoning your soul—they are dragging you down into a dark bottomless pit, where you will sink for ever, and for ever, and for ever, further away from light and God.”

‘Bessy could bear it no longer; a great terror was upon her, and wrenching her earrings from her ears, she threw them down before her, sobbing aloud.’]

‘In a little time the Lord inclined me to read and pray much in private, on my knees. O the precious seasons I experienced in this exercise! In a little more than one year after this, the Lord convinced me of the necessity of being sanctified, and more sensible than ever I was of being pardoned. I sought this blessing almost day and night, for even in sleep my mind was occupied with the subject. I had many fears concerning it. I thought if I got the blessing I should soon lose it again. Besides I was not prepared for it. But under the prayer of that man of God, Mr. Bramwell, I was enabled to lay hold on the blessing, and to sink into the purple flood. I held this blessing with a trembling hand, and was enabled to grow in the grace wherein I stood, and to rejoice in hope of a greater glory, still pressing after the fulness of God; for it is one thing to be emptied of sin, and to feel nothing contrary to love, and another to be filled with the fruits of righteousness. I experienced many deep baptisms into the spirit of God. I saw it my duty to be wholly devoted to God, and to be

set apart for the Master's use; and after many struggles, thousands of tears, and much prayer, with fasting, I did enter into a glorious liberty. I could truly say, "I am crucified with Christ; I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me." O the blessed deadness to the world, and to everything in the world, and the creature, I cannot describe. I began to act a little in prayer meetings, and to visit the sick, and to do anything the Lord set me about.

'Mr. Bramwell observed, in a sermon, "Why are there not more women preachers? Because they are not faithful to their call." I concluded that if ever the Lord called me I would be faithful, and almost immediately I felt it my duty to call sinners to repentance. I laboured under this conviction for nearly two years. Travailing in birth for souls, the love of God was as a fire shut up in my bones, and the thoughts of the blessed work of bringing sinners to Christ drank up my spirits so that I knew not how to live. I felt assured that if I did not preach I never could be happy, for I was sensible it was the will of God. But how it must be brought about I could not tell, for I felt shut up, and I did not tell my mind, for I was determined never to open the door myself. I gave myself to continual prayer and searching the Scriptures that I might not deceive myself; but the more I prayed, and fasted, and read the word of God, the stronger my call was felt, until I knew not how to live. The language of my heart was, "Oh that I had wings like a dove, then would I fly away and be at rest."

'The first thing that induced me to lead a class and to exhort at meetings was, that I caught the putrid fever, by visiting a poor distressed family. I became very ill, and wished to go "home" to my Father's. I prayed to the Lord and exercised faith in Christ. I did not send for a doctor. I thought when Christ was applied unto, in the days of His flesh, by any, and for anything, either for body or soul, He did for them whatever they had need of, and while I was looking to Him and exercising my faith upon Him, I most powerfully felt these words, "And He took her by the hand, and the fever left her." And I felt, in the twinkling of an eye, that all the fever was gone, and all my pain had ceased. I was quite restored to health. Glory be to God!

'I went to Derby. The dear people begged I would lead a class. We also had a blessed prayer meeting. I spoke a little, and some good was done. This was the means of my becoming acquainted with the dear friends that first opened the door of usefulness unto me. I cannot help

seeing the kind hand of a gracious God in these things, however others may sneer, and call it enthusiasm, or what they please. A second time happened in 1801 or 1802, which was made a blessing to my soul. A Mary Voce, a poor unhappy woman, poisoned her child. She was confined in the town gaol at Nottingham, tried at the March assizes, and condemned to suffer. A Miss Richards (now in heaven), who was eminently pious and useful, was granted the favour of being with her night and day, until the morning of her execution. I longed to be with her also, and how my heart rejoiced when I heard Miss Richards say, "Betsy, go with me to the gaol directly." Accordingly I went, and a most mournful night we had. John Clarck determined not to eat or sleep until the Lord answered his prayer for her. And at two o'clock in the morning the Lord satisfied his mind. We each felt something of it. The next night Mr. John Taft came to see us, and John Clarck came also. At this time she was in great distress, and I felt her sins too great a burden for her to bear. All she wanted was mercy.'

At one time she was so hardened that she watched for an opportunity to take away the lives of these pious women. She confessed to them that if they had fallen asleep she should have tried to strangle them.

'At seven o'clock (on the morning of the execution) we all knelt down to prayer, and at ten minutes before eight o'clock the Lord in mercy spoke peace to her soul. She cried out, "Oh how happy I am! the Lord has pardoned all my sins, and I am going to heaven." She never lost the evidence for one moment, and always rejoiced in the hope of glory. Is it not by grace we are saved through faith? And is not the Saviour exalted at the Father's right hand to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins? If salvation were by works who would be saved? The vilest and worst may come unto Him. None need despair. None ought to presume. Miss Richards and I attended her to the place of execution. Our feelings on this occasion were very acute. We rode with her in the cart to the awful place. Our people sang with her all the way, which I think was a mile and a half. We were enabled to lift up our hearts unto the Lord in her behalf, and she was enabled to bear a public testimony that God in mercy had pardoned all her sins. When the cap was

drawn over her face, and she was about to be turned off, she cried, "Glory! glory! glory! the angels of God are waiting around me." And she died almost without a struggle. At this awful spot I lost a great deal of the fear of man, which to me had been a great hindrance for a long time. I felt if God would send me to the uttermost parts of the earth I would go, and at intervals felt I could embrace a martyr's flame. Oh this burning love of God, what will it not endure? I could not think I had an enemy in the whole world. I am certain I enjoyed that salvation, that if they had smote me on one cheek, I could have turned to them the other also. I lived

"The life of Heaven above,
All the life of glorious love."

I seemed myself to live between heaven and earth. I was not in heaven because of my body, nor upon earth because of my soul. Earth was a scale to heaven, and all I tasted was God. I could pray without ceasing, and in everything give thanks. I felt that the secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him. If I wanted to know anything I had only to ask, and it was given, generally in a moment. Whether I was in the public street, or at my work, or in my private room, I had continual intercourse with my God; and many, I think I may say hundreds of times, He shone upon His word, and showed me the meaning thereof, that is, texts of Scripture, so as to furnish me with sufficient matter to speak to poor sinners for a sufficient length of time.

"Now, it may be asked, would the All-wise God have done these things for me and in me if He had not intended to accomplish some blessed design? If the person had been a male instead of a female, would it not have been concluded at once, "he is called to preach; certainly these things testify the truth of it"? But it is argued, "I suffer not a woman to speak in the church." Is the Apostle alluding to preaching? I believe not. If he is, in other places he contradicts himself, which under inspiration he could not do. And does he not sanction women labouring in the Gospel? Is the Apostle alone in this matter? Search the Old and New Testaments, and you will find many daughters that did prophesy, or were prophetesses. And Joel says: "In the latter days, saith God, I will pour out my spirit upon my servants and handmaids." So that you see the dispensation is not ended. But let us see what a wise and good man (Dr. Adam Clarke) has to say on the subject: "Let you women keep silence in churches" (1 Cor., 14 c., 34 v.).

[This was a Jewish ordinance. Women were not permitted to teach in the assemblies, or even to ask questions. It was taught that a woman should know nothing but the use of her distaff.] "This was their condition till the time of the Gospel, when, according to the prediction of Joel, the Spirit of God was to be poured out on the women as well as the men, that they might prophesy, i.e., teach. And that they did prophesy or teach, is evident from what the Apostle says where he lays down rules to regulate this part of their conduct while ministering in the Church."

"It is evident from the context that the Apostle refers to asking questions, and what we call dictating in the assemblies. It was permitted to any man to ask questions, to object, altercation, or attempt to refute, in the synagogue; but this liberty was not allowed to any woman."

"The religion preached by Paul was a new religion, and it was and still is the character of women to be inquisitive; and not being able to comprehend all that was taught, they would naturally interrupt by asking questions. So Paul says: 'If they will learn anything, let them ask their husbands at home.'"

"I went to my master to give him notice to leave his service, not knowing what might befall me, for I did not know how soon I might return, as the Lord had shown me I should be much opposed, but, blessed be the Lord, I had a little of Abraham's faith. I told my master I must leave his work. "Leave!" he replied, in astonishment. "Why, what art thee going to do? Can thou better thyself? We cannot part with thee, thou art one of the old hands. I will advance thy wages, and give thee as much as thou can get anywhere." I said, "Sir, I must go into the country, the friends wish it, and I may stay many weeks together." He said, "Go, and thy place shall be kept for thee as long as thou wilt say thou will have it; and thou shalt go and come when thou please, and no one shall say a word to thee." I think no one can help seeing the hand of the Lord in this, as it was as good as an independency to me. Whenever I had done my work I returned, and met with nothing but kind treatment. I went by coach to Derby, and called upon an intimate friend of mine at Miss Willis's. After tea I left my friends, and retired to pray. I prayed about one hour and went down, but I did not feel fully satisfied. I retired again, and how long I continued I do not know, but the Lord was pleased to show me His glory in such a manner as He never showed me before. The room was filled with angels and glory.

My soul was filled with the glory of God.
I felt

"The speechless awe that dares not
move,

And all the silent Heaven of love."

I went on my way rejoicing to the place appointed. I was taken to a Miss Bond, a governess of a boarding-school, and a class leader. She behaved like a Christian to me. A good man, a class leader, came to me, and said, "Sister, I hope you will not be hurt with what I am going to say to you. Our young preacher and circuit steward have written to Nottingham to stop you." I said, "I am here already, and if the Lord has anything for me to do, I will do it. If not I am willing to return."

This young preacher many years after came to a missionary meeting, and began to speak sneeringly of Mrs. Evans; but his host made him to understand that both her piety and preaching were highly appreciated in Wirksworth, and throughout the Cromford circuit.

"The leader said, "You shall hold a meeting." Accordingly we went, and had a powerful time. Many were in distress, but much could not be done because of unbelief. I went from place to place, and the Lord gave me great light into His word. He was my very present help in every time of need. I felt many waters could not quench love, and when the Prince of this world came he found nothing in me contrary to love. I could always have been with God in private. It was a pain to be called down to eat anything. My appetite was nearly gone. I soon lost my colour, and grew weak and poorly; but many were brought to the Lord in the Burton circuit, who stood nobly in their Master's cause. Several have fallen asleep in Jesus, among whom you may find a Mr. John Ordish. Those were blessed days. I can scarcely think of them without weeping."

She was one day preaching in an orchard. Mr. Ordish and some of his youthful companions were under the hedge on the outside, being ashamed to be seen mingling among the crowd. She drew the bow at a venture. The arrow reached, and stuck fast in the young man's conscience, and ended in his conversion. He became a local preacher.

"I was out sixteen weeks, during which time I met with much opposition. I was looked upon by some as a vile impostor, and not fit to live, but my language was

"For this let men revile my name:

No cross I'll shun, I fear no shame.

All hail reproach, and welcome pain,

Only Thy terrors, Lord, restrain."

At length my way was blocked up, and there was not a single door open to me for a long time. Two blessed families, namely, Mr. Smith, of Griffy Dam, and Mr. Gold, of Brown Hill, in the Leek circuit, kindly offered me a home if I would live with them, but this I could not do.

"I returned to Nottingham again, and went to my work, and was received joyfully; but I was not so happy as I had been, for in this dark and cloudy day I gave way to reasoning which proved hurtful to me. I must forbear speaking of particulars, as they are so painful to me; but I believe if I never had returned, and kept in the work, I should not have married."

But painful reports and painful opposition cannot now affect her. A report was circulated that she made collections and appropriated the money to her own use; and it was once said that the gown in which she stood up to preach was obtained by such means. One woman with whom she had lodged apparently credited this report, and watched her narrowly. Mrs. Evans said, "I know what you are looking at. You are looking at my gown; but I bought it with my own money." But the woman would not let her go without searching her bundle.

"I lost great glory, but not sanctification. I loved God with all my heart, but I had not that clear light, and that burning zeal, and that close union, as before. I could say much on this head, but I forbear. I believe many things which I suffered were occasioned by my own short-sightedness, and the want of love in others; and were I to explain the whole, it would do no good to any one, and my desire is to do no harm. In the course of twelve months I was united to my dear husband, and O what things occurred to distress my mind! Those that formerly thought I did wrong in preaching now said I was fighting against God, and that the door for usefulness was then wide open. I

could not see my way clear to marry, and only eternity can clear up this point for me. However, I am fully persuaded that I could not have had a more suitable companion. He loved the Lord's blessed work from his heart, and did not only preach himself, but made every way he possibly could for me. Blessed be the Lord! I felt the very day I was married as though I married not.'

In going to her future home, she addressed her husband as 'my brother.'

'I was enabled to pursue my way at every convenient opportunity to speak in the name of the Lord. I met with very little persecution or opposition when I had a friend to plead my cause, and the work of God broke out, and we had most powerful times. Many were brought into peace, and I believe the whole village had a powerful call. We had access to several fresh places.'

She said that she never felt quite at home until they went to live at Milhouses, near Wirksworth. This was nearly twelve years after she wrote this story of her life. At this time they lived on Roston Common. They then went to Burton-on-Trent, and afterwards to Derby. There were not many places around Derby at which she did not preach. The circuit was very large. When indisposed, her husband would send her to fill his own appointments. He was once called to task by the superintendent of the Quarterly Local Preachers' Meeting. He said, in answer to the charge, 'The half of me went.' 'The half of me!' exclaimed the superintendent; 'brother Evans has learned a new logic. He might have added, too, "the better half."' He was planned once at Breadsell. It was in the depth of winter. He took with him his wife and several friends. Their nearest way was by footpath through Breadsell churchyard. When the time came to return home, it was very dark, and some reluctance was shown to take the footpath. One of the

party volunteered to be the guide. 'Come on,' he shouted; 'I'll lead you right.' He then walked into a newly-made grave, and several went in after him. When they lived at Derby they held meetings at their own house. A member of the Society of Friends occasionally visited them and addressed the company. He had a habit of hitching up his trousers, and at the same time taking a step, so that he finished his discourse at the end of the room opposite to where he began. While living at Roston, Mr. Evans went to Lichfield to obtain a licence for a house which they had opened for divine service. The bishop granted the licence, saying, 'I will license your pig-stye if you like.' They carried the gospel to Cubley, Elison, and Roston, and preached at Ashbourn Green, and also at surrounding villages. Many times they had to return home with empty stomachs, but with glad hearts.

'I believe we are where the Lord would have us to be. When Mr. White was in this circuit, a friend asked him to let me lead a few backsliders. He said I might lead all the backsliders in the town, so I formed a class of about four members, and, glory be to God! since that time four classes have sprung out of it. I believe that there never has been that power attending my speaking as at first, but glory be to God! I do see some fruits of my labours which encourage my mind. I do feel a confidence that the Lord will never leave nor forsake me. I feel I am the Lord's, and all I want is to glorify my God below, and find my way to heaven. I declare before the Lord, who searcheth all hearts, that what I have written is intended for His glory; and though there are many omissions, yet there is to my knowledge nothing but the truth. And I declare, before a heart-searching God, that my reasons for speaking in His holy name are, and always were, from a sense of duty; and not because I thought myself sufficient to do anything of myself, or to please myself in anything, but to be the servant of Christ. And I don't at all repent of anything which I have done in this blessed work of striving to snatch sinners

from a burning hell, only that I have not at all times acted wisely, and that I have not had more zeal for His glory, and that I have not had more pure love mixed up with all my performances. When I take a view of my life, I conclude that at the very best (that the most devoted part of it) I have been an unprofitable servant. I believe there has not been a day wherein I might not have done something more for God, and received more of His grace. I see I need the atoning blood to all my performances to render them acceptable to God, and, glory be to God! this I feel I have. It is God that justifies; who is it he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, and He is my all and in all. He is everything to me that I want. Since I have written this I have as sensibly felt the Divine favour and approbation concerning it, as I do feel that I am in existence.'

Here ends the story of Mrs. Evans's life as briefly told by herself; and here begins the story as told by a local preacher, who went on circuit with her and worked with her. In the foregoing narrative he has inserted some statements of his own.

In the year 1810 a chapel was built by the Wesleyan Methodists in Wirksworth, to which there was attached a Sunday-school. About a year after Miss Ellen Hallam was deputed to go to Derby to ask Mrs. Evans to come over and preach what were then called the charity sermons. To this request Miss Hallam kindly consented; and as there were neither railways, stage-coaches, nor omnibuses in these parts in those days, Miss Hallam had to perform the journey on foot, a walk of about twenty-eight miles.

The fact that a woman was going to preach in the chapel created no small stir, both in town and country, and the false reports that were in circulation about her and the Methodists in general added greatly to her popularity. The chapel was densely crowded on both occasions. One of these reports had reached the ears of the

narrator, and excited his boyish curiosity. He was then a scholar in the Church Sunday-school. He had been warned, in common with the rest of the boys, not to go near the Methodist chapel. In the evening, however, he went to hear the woman preach. The first thing that attracted his attention was a small Quaker-shaped bonnet that hung on a holder in the wall. He then noticed the woman preacher. There was also another woman in the pulpit, with a baby on her knee. The service was not commenced when the boy entered the chapel. In a little while the woman preacher gave out a hymn. She had on a cap that fitted close to her head, and the border was without a plait. The rest of her attire was equally plain. In those days she had a rosy face and was stout. After singing, she prayed and preached without a book. In the year 1812 her husband came to Milhouses, near Wirksworth. The manufacture of small ware was commenced in the district, and Mr. Evans and others were employed here. In the following year the narrator was employed by the firm, and became well known to Mrs. Evans and her husband. The Christian friendship thus commenced lasted till her death. When they had become settled in their new home they felt for the spiritual welfare of the neighbourhood. They opened their house for preaching on a Sunday morning, the preacher always being a welcome guest at dinner afterwards.

At this time Mrs. Evans was not on the plan, but vacancies were often left for her, and any of the preachers were glad to give up an appointment for her. She laboured a good deal at home, using means for the spiritual welfare of those employed by her husband. A service for exhortation and

prayer was begun and carried on by Mrs. Evans and her husband. It was held every Wednesday in the forenoon. Several of the 'hands' were converted, and a class was formed at Milhouses, which was led by the husband.

About the year 1815 a revival broke out in Wirksworth, in which Mrs. Evans took a prominent part. She preached a good deal in the open air, almost in every part of the town. The narrator has seen her labour until her cap has been drenched with perspiration. Her prayers were agony. 'Many were added unto the Lord.' But the most remarkable outpouring of the Spirit took place in the year 1818. Two days before Good Friday in that year Mrs. Evans had been preaching in the factory. She spoke in language that reached many hearts. At that time the factory was worked by a relay of hands, and Good Friday made no difference with manufacturers. On this Wednesday night the factory was stopped, and Mammon had to give place to the cries of mercy. A local preacher attempted to preach, but his voice was lost in the cries of the penitents. The night was spent in prayer and praise. There were no complaints in those days of cold chapels, poor congregations, and poor collections. Mrs. Evans had a very large share of converts added to her class in this revival. A youth, who joined about this time, died two years afterwards. His last words were, 'Glory! glory! glory!' Another became a missionary, and laboured ten years in the West Indies. Mrs. Evans was the mother of a large family. She helped to maintain them by doing some of the factory work at home. Although so much engaged by household affairs, she found time in the week to visit her members and the afflicted, and to collect for the

missionary cause. She was always usefully employed. She did not while away her time, or spend it in idle gossip with her neighbours. She was not only pious abroad, but pious at home.

The factory did not give good accommodation for partaking of meals. The men were obliged to crowd into a small place which was used as a counting-house to have their dinner. Mrs. Evans went to the place one day, and it was full. She said to her husband, 'My dear, thou should'st pray with these folks.' He replied, 'My dear, thou should'st set the example.' 'So I will,' she said; and she fell on her knees and prayed with them. She had often invitations to preach, not only in her own circuit, but in other circuits. She never put the societies to unnecessary expense. She generally walked to the places appointed. If she had to go a long way, a friend would sometimes lend her a vehicle or a pony.

About the year 1822 the Revs. W. E. Miller and R. Gibson were appointed to the Cromford circuit. Mrs. Evans knew the former when in the Nottingham circuit, and he had some recollection of her. She lost no time in giving him an invitation to her dwelling. She also sent invitations to all the local preachers in the town and neighbourhood to meet at her house on a certain day. They took tea together, and afterwards spent a couple of hours in spiritual conversation and prayer. Mr. Miller enjoyed a high state of grace, and very earnestly pressed upon his local brethren the necessity of enjoying the blessing of entire sanctification. The conversation was a blessing to some. Mrs. Evans fully entered into it. The younger part of the company sat as listening learners.

In the year 1823 the Lord again visited His people. There was

again a shaking among the dry bones, and a revival of religion that far exceeded all that had taken place before was the result. Mrs. Evans entered into the work with all her might. Preachers and people had one object—the glory of God and the salvation of souls. All worked that could work, and all prayed that could pray. The chapel now became densely crowded, and a considerable amount of money was promised towards its enlargement; but it did not meet the approbation of some, and was never carried out. Every sitting was occupied, and many others were wanted; but there were none to let.

The Stanton people had heard that the Lord was among the people of Wirksworth, and many came to the love-feasts out of the circuit of Bakewell. Mrs. Evans was invited to preach at Bakewell. She accepted the invitation. The preaching then was at the house of brother John Gladwins. Mrs. Evans very often visited Stanton, and great good was done. A chapel was built, to which was attached a Sunday-school, and a prosperous society, which sent out two missionaries.

On one occasion she was invited to go to Toulgrave. The narrator had to go to Stanton the same day. They went part of the way together. She had a pony and he had a donkey. He could not make the brayer go. Mrs. Evans tried it, and failed also, and there was considerable difficulty in accomplishing the journey. The day was not a very profitable one. Good was done in the morning; but at the close the devil put his foot in, and spoiled all. The woman who had invited her had no authority to do so, and neglected to let the friends know; but the appointed preacher kindly gave up the service, and she preached an excellent sermon.

Soon after she went to preach at Wessington Green. The day was beautifully fine. There were very few houses in the neighbourhood; but a multitude of people gathered together to hear the preacher. At the close of the service a well-dressed woman went up to Mr. Evans and said, 'Sir, twenty years ago I lived servant with Mrs. W——, at K——, and while I lived with her I robbed her of half-a-crown. I have been a miserable woman ever since. Will you have the kindness to make her out, and give her this half-crown?' Mr. Evans was true to his trust. He found the lady, and gave her the half-crown; but she had no recollection of such servant ever being in her service.

Mrs. Evans was called upon to preach at Farzely. One of the leaders was greatly prejudiced against a woman preaching; but after the service he said, 'If the devil himself could preach like that, I would go and hear him.' She visited Tamworth and Ashby-de-la-Zouch. The latter place and the country around it had been favoured much with her labours in her younger days. She preached at Leeds in conjunction with Ann Carr and Martha Williams. The Derby and Burton-on-Trent circuit had much of her labour.

In the early part of her life Mrs. Evans was advised by some of the itinerant preachers to join the Society of Friends. She often observed to the narrator that her path would have been far more pleasant had she done so; besides, she would have had a greater field for labour. In her younger days she experienced much opposition; but while living in the Cromford circuit her path was pleasant, until a Mr. F—— came into the circuit, and he plainly told her 'he was no friend to female preaching.' It was generally understood that a resolution had been passed in Con-

ference to discourage it. Certain pious and talented women were rising up in the Derby circuit, and promised to be very useful; but the superintendent, at a public meeting, declared 'he would have no woman preaching in his circuit.' This led to a division in the circuit. Mrs. Evans, with a few others, retired. A new connection was formed, and amalgamated with the Wesleyan Association, contrary to the wishes of the societies.

Trials of a business character now came thick upon her husband. His father was a joiner, and he had been brought up to the trade with the rest of his brothers. They lived at a village a few miles beyond Ashbourn. It was here that Evans and his helpmate first settled, and here 'she laboured much in the Lord.' They removed to Burton, and, after much mental and physical suffering, went to Derby, where he obtained a knowledge of the machiney used for small-ware manufacture. He had a partner with him in his business of joiner and builder. They made what they believed to be improvements in the machinery. They went to Wirksworth, where they took a portion of a mill and commenced business on their own account. Their improvements had many drawbacks, which ran away with much of the profit; but the partners made money. They were about the first to commence power-weaving in that branch of business in this country, and the reader will understand that large profits were made, when he is informed that men received half-a-crown then where twopence-halfpenny is now paid. Other manufacturers improved the machinery. There was a lively competition, and the result came to the Evanses in the shape of ruin. At a time when age had overtaken them,

adversity broke down the health of Mrs. Evans. Where were her friends in her time of trial? Where were the Wesleyans and the Methodists?—where were the people she had helped and loved through long years?—where were the sinners who had been called to repentance?—where were the brethren? It is the old story: they left her alone in adversity. Very few entered her house to give her their sympathy and prayers; but she knew the Lord was with her, and in Him she had an abiding refuge. Some respectable people of the town (not connected with the same church) looked kindly on her and on her husband.

She related a remarkable incident to the narrator. She was acquainted with a Miss Richards, who in illness said to her, 'Hark, Betsy! don't thou hear heavenly music?' 'No,' was the reply. 'Come here and put thy head upon mine.' She did so, and for a moment or two she heard the most sweet music she ever heard on earth. This is beyond the narrator's comprehension, and he leaves it without comment.

The last eight years of her life she passed through the furnace of affliction, but in the midst of all the Lord was with her, and she felt Him present in the furnace, and shouted her Deliverer's name. Three parts of her life were spent in doing the will of God, and the rest in suffering it. It would be hard to say in which state she glorified God the most; but whether in doing or suffering the will of her Lord, she was preparing to meet her reward.

A few weeks before her death, she related a remarkable dream, which she always believed to be illustrative of her life, and from which she derived much consolation. She had been eight or nine

years in the way to heaven. She dreamed she was going a long journey, and the way was up a steep hill. There followed her what appeared to be lions. They roared most awfully, but they were somehow prevented from getting at her. They followed until she reached the top of the hill, when they left her. On the summit of the hill there stood a beautiful palace. The door was ajar. She entered, and was met by a woman wearing a drab-coloured gown, a white shawl, and a plain cap. As soon as this woman saw the newcomer she commenced dancing and shouting, 'She's come! she's come! she's come!' with all her might. 'Her enemies have not been too mighty for her!' The dreamer was then taken to a large room. It was surrounded by beings that were glorious and happy. At the head of a large table there sat a noble-looking personage. As soon as she entered the room, he rose from his seat and said to her, 'Butter and honey shalt thou eat all the days of thy life;' and she awoke. She said that dream had been a comfort to her all through her Christian pilgrimage; and although she had been pursued by enemies all the way through life, she believed she should arrive safely at last at the palace of her glorious King.

The last two years of her life she was confined to her habitation by a painful affliction, which was made very profitable to her soul. Often has the narrator heard her glorify God in the fire. He has been surprised to hear her bursts of rapture, when a little before she had been only able to whisper. There were times when she had to combat with the enemy. It was not to be expected that Satan would allow a soul like hers, that had been the means of doing so much good to others, to slip out

of the world into heaven without making some effort to destroy her peace, if not to ruin her for ever. One night when she was very full of pain, these words were impressed on her mind: 'I have heard thy groanings, and am come down to deliver thee.' She said, 'Do, Lord, come quickly.' She felt much comforted and happy. Instantly the enemy suggested to her, 'The Lord you serve deals very hardly with you in afflicting you so long.' She felt grieved that she should for one moment have had such a thought. She cried unto the Lord, 'Have I sinned, or is it my infirmity? Have not other Christians had similar conflicts when passing through the valley of the shadow of death?' The Lord was mindful of the promise He had given. He came down in the power of His Spirit and delivered her from temptation. Words were applied to her mind which gave her great comfort: 'But ye are washed, but ye are sanctified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the spirit of our God;' and then, in accents of praise—

'I have an advocate above,
A friend before the throne of God.'

She was unspeakably happy the remaining part of the night. In relating the temptation she said: 'Thou knowest, Isaac, all such unkind thoughts of God have been as poison to my mind. I know the Lord has been with me all through the wilderness, and hath led me with a gentle hand. Thou knowest I could not help the temptation. It seemed as if Satan would thrust it into my heart.' She said what a comfort these words had been to her:

'Fear not, my brethren, I shall stand
On the borders of the land;
Jesus Christ, the Father's Son,
Bids ye undismayed go on.'

A few weeks before her death

she had this dream: 'I saw in one corner of the room' (pointing with her finger) 'the bottomless pit. I saw Satan and a great multitude of fiends like himself, and a very many people apparently in great agony. Satan looked vicious at me. O! I cannot tell thee what an ugly being he appeared to me. I looked at him and at all the others quite undismayed for these words were so sweetly applied to me:

"Not all the power of hell can fright
A soul that walks with Christ in light,
He walks and cannot fall."

Here she stopped, and said to a friend, 'You must not stumble over the last line, my dear. It is conditional that they cannot fall while they walk with Christ in light.

"Clearly he sees and wins his way,
And shining to the perfect day,
He more than conquers all."

Since I have had this dream I have not been much harassed. I believe it was to show me that he was not allowed to plague me any more. How good the Lord is! Praise His holy name!" One night she was sitting on the bedside. She was not able to lie down, being full of pains. A friend supported her. All at once she exclaimed:

"See from His head, His hands, His feet,
Sorrow and love flow mingled down!
Did e'er such love and sorrow meet?
Or thorns compose so rich a crown?"

And again:

"Angels assist ye noble powers,
Strike all your harps of gold;
And when you've raised your highest
notes,
His love can ne'er be told."

She wept for a long time, but they were tears of joy. When she had recovered a little she shouted:

"Worthy the Lamb that died," they cry,
To be exalted thus;
"Worthy the Lamb," our hearts reply,
For He was slain for us.
Glory be to God. Hallelujah!"

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The friend who was with her said: 'I shall never forget that night so long as live. I have been in meetings where there has been a great influence and good feeling, but I never experienced anything like that. I asked her if she had seen anything in the room, and how it was that she had strength to shout so loud, when but a little time before she was so low that I had scarcely been able to hear her speak. She said: "I did not see anything with my mortal eyes, neither did I shout with my own strength: the Lord enabled me, love. I never in my life had such a clear view of my precious Saviour's sufferings on the cross as I had then. It was showed to me so clearly how He suffered for sinners, and bled for all, for you and for me:—

'Love so amazing, so divine,
Demands our soul, our life, our all.'

She asked me if I felt the sweet glory that was in the room. I told her I never felt anything to equal it. She said: "I am very thankful thou didst. I trust thou wilt get some good to thy soul." One night, a week before she died, she exclaimed, 'Oh! how happy I shall be when I have gained the victory. Canaan is a happy place. Will ye go to the land of Canaan?' She remarked to her friend that they had had some very happy seasons together in the night. She said they were attended at times by invisible spirits, that were sent by the blessed God to administer comfort. A few days before her death her memory began to fail her. She told her friend she could not pray more than a minute or two at a time before she found herself rambling. She said, 'It is all right. I am quite happy. If it is the Lord's will, I wish to keep sensible, so that I may praise my Maker while I live; but His will

be done.' Sometimes she would commence repeating a portion of Scripture or a verse of a hymn, and then lose the thread of what she was trying to repeat. Then she would turn to her husband and say, 'But thou knowest, my dear, I can praise God.' She was very anxious that every one who came to see her should pray with her. She would say to them, 'Bless you! kneel down and pray.' But many of her friends seemed to think that she was too holy to need an interest in their prayers. When her husband was in the room, she never allowed many minutes to pass without asking him to pray. Throughout her religious life she was a woman of prayer. She was a practical comment upon 'Pray without ceasing,' and her prayer was agony, and agony with her was heaven. A day or two before her death there were times when she seemed almost unconscious; but she would still rave about prayer, and ask some one to pray. A short time before her death she said, 'O how happy I am! I don't feel to want anything to eat or drink. I am inexpressibly happy. It may be a lightening before death. The Lord only knows. His will be done. Glory be to God!'

The narrator left his employment in the middle of the day, and hastened to her bedside. He found her sensible and able to speak a little. He had been chosen to improve the event of her death whenever it should take place. She asked him what would be his text, and he told her, 'She hath done what she could.' She shook her head, and said, 'I have not done what I could. I would rather it should be "Now they desire a better country."' He said, 'Most likely the woman could have performed more acts of kindness, both to the

Saviour and others; but the Saviour spoke comparatively. She had expended all her living upon Him. Her whole stock was gone. What could she do more? So it is I must speak comparatively of you.' With this explanation she seemed satisfied. He then said, 'I have one question to ask you. I do not ask you for my own satisfaction, but for the satisfaction of others. You know there are many who think you have done wrong in preaching, and you have had to suffer much on that account. How do you feel now on that matter?' He remembers her look, manner, and words. 'Tell the people I do not repent preaching the Gospel. I only repent that I have not been more faithful.' She talked about the funeral with great composure, and gave orders how everything should be conducted. Her friend, to whom these orders were given, said, 'I do not like you to say so much on that subject. We will talk about something else.' She replied, 'I do assure thee it is a pleasing subject to me. To die would be gain.'

The following night she was much lower. She often said, 'Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my end be like unto His.' She thought she might have another attack of the enemy. She prayed that God would preserve her from it. She rested upon the Lord's faithfulness, and Satan was not allowed to annoy her any more. She said, 'I am convinced we lose much by not expecting answers to our prayers, and by not exercising faith when we pray. How insulting it is to the Almighty when his children pray and don't expect that for which they pray.'

On the Sunday she altered much. She seemed to arouse herself for some extra effort. She

talked wonderfully loud in admonishing her family. She asked them very pressingly to sing a verse, but they were all overwhelmed with sorrow, and could not. In the night she began to sing 'Other refuge have I none,' but she could not proceed. On Monday she was labouring under great pain at her chest, and, to all appearance, insensible as to what was going on in the room. On Tuesday the narrator went to see her. He found her perfectly sensible, and asked her if Christ was precious. She waved her hand. She was unable to speak, except in a low whisper. He said, 'I understand the sign you mean. You have got the victory?' She nodded assent, and again waved her hand. By the motion of her lips, he thought she asked him to pray. He asked if he should do so. She again nodded, and he prayed. When he arose from his knees she put out her hand and took an affectionate farewell. Then she lifted up both her hands as if commending him to God, that he might be kept faithful, and that they might meet again in the better world. In the afternoon her friends thought she was dying. Her husband came into the room, took her by the hand, and said, 'My dear, thy race is almost run.' She said, 'Glory! Thou hast fought a good fight. Thou hast

kept the faith, and there is laid up for thee a crown.' She continued sensible throughout the day.

About nine o'clock in the evening the narrator called again. She appeared to be in a sound sleep. After waiting a short time, she opened her eyes and put out her hand. He said, 'Your journey is nearly ended.' She raised her hand. 'The Lord gives you the victory.' She gave the usual sign. He said, 'It was through the blood of the Lamb,' and she shook her head, as was her manner when in health. Then she put out both her hands that they might raise her up. She made an effort to speak, but could not. She motioned with her lips for him to pray. She lay as if in sleep an hour or two. She appeared to breathe quicker, and her hair came down before her face. She said they must call the family up, for she was going. Her husband had just got in the room, and fallen on his knees, when she breathed her last. It was her wish that her funeral might be without ostentation, and that she might be buried like the Quakers, and that no stone or monument should be raised to her memory, but that she should be laid near to Mr. Thomas Spicer, who was a Methodist local preacher for nearly fifty years. She was buried according to her desires.

(To be continued.)



A GREEK LADY'S NARRATIVE.

(FROM LIFE.)

ONE of the richest and most populous of the islands in the *Ægean* Sea, fifty-three years ago, was Chios (or Scio). It had obtained great privileges at the time of the fall of Constantinople, in 1453, and still kept those privileges at the period of which I write. The island was governed by an oligarchy of families, who annually elected three of their members, whose duty it was to levy a capitation tax, and pay it to the Turks, together with a tribute of gum-mastic for the use of the imperial seraglio.* This comparative immunity from Turkish rapacity was the origin of the wealth and prosperity of Chios. The island is rocky, and about three times the size of the Isle of Wight; had been famed in antiquity for its wine, and in later times for its gum, figs, and silk. The entire aristocracy, if it might be so called, was commercial, resembling that of the Italian States in the middle ages. Indeed, the names of the chief families in Chios indicate their probable descent from the Italians, who, in the Fourth Crusade, took Constantinople, and, with their names, may have been transmitted that aptitude for business which characterised the merchant-princes of Genoa and Venice.

It was the custom of the upper class in the island to send every boy, at the age of thirteen or fourteen, to the commercial house of the family at Smyrna, Constantinople, Malta, or elsewhere. He returned when about twenty-five, married, and went abroad again, at intervals as the exigencies of business demanded,

only settling in the island permanently when a middle-aged man. Thus, the resident population consisted chiefly of old men, women, and children, and of these the women never left the island.

Virtually independent of Turkish despotism, prosperous, and peace-loving, the Chioots felt no inclination to join the rebellion of the mainland, and other islands, when at last they were goaded to insurrection by a yoke which pressed more heavily year by year. But the assistance of the wealthy Chioots was important for the success of the scheme; and an expedition was consequently organised from the neighbouring island of Samos in the winter of 1821-22, with the object of landing on Chios, and stirring up the island to rebellion.

Rumours of this plot reached the Turkish governor of Chios, who commanded the garrison of three hundred men which, according to old treaties, the Turks kept in the capital town. He sent at once to Constantinople for succour, and, at the same time, demanded hostages from the governing body of the island. The committee of three, ignorant of the movements of the Samians, and themselves strongly opposed to any revolutionary measures, were yet reluctant to intrust their relations and friends to the tender mercies of the garrison. But there was no help for it. Sixty of the heads of the richest families in Chios were sent to the fort, thirty at a time, as pledges for the good conduct of the rest. Reinforcements had arrived from Constantinople meanwhile, and it was now confidently hoped that the Samians would give up their mad enterprise, when the

* The ladies of the seraglio chew gum-mastic much as a sailor does his quid.

news of their landing fell, like a bomb, upon the island. It was on the 10th of March, 1822, that the Samians effected a landing, and dispersed at once the Turkish troops sent to oppose them. They at once laid siege to the fort. The Chioti were terror-stricken, fearing for the lives of their thirty hostages; and, though it has been asserted that some of them joined the Samians, it is an unquestioned fact that the main body of the inhabitants remained neutral, if not actually inimical, to the besiegers. On the 30th of March the whole Turkish fleet hove in sight, the capital was bombarded, and, under cover of night, seven thousand troops were landed. Then, the Samians, seeing the game was hopeless, ran away, leaving Chios to its fate. The hostages were hanged from the yard-arms of the Turkish flagship, and the whole Turkish rabble were let loose, to plunder, burn, and carry into slavery.

It is at this point that the narrative begins of which I am about to repeat the substance (if not in the actual words of the speaker), as I heard and wrote it down at the time. The old lady, though silver-haired and bowed with age, retained the clear intelligence, the vivid memory, the passionate heart of youth, whose fire the long rain of years had left unquenched. As she spoke her black eye kindled, the flush mounted to her pale cheek, the hand that she raised from time to time shook with nervous excitement. She was living again those fifty-two years ago, was once more the young wife and mother, nursing the babe at her breast, was the witness and the victim of atrocities which were seared, with every minute detail, into her brain.

My husband was absent in Smyrna, began Madame A. . . .

like all the young merchants of Chios, business obliged him to be frequently away from the island for months at a time. I, and my little baby, were left with my father, mother, and sisters, when the news reached us that seven thousand Turks had landed. We knew what we had to fear, though imagination fell far short of the reality; and we fled, in company with several of our friends, to a neighbouring monastery, situated on a height. Here we hoped to be safe; but soon found ourselves pursued, and knowing that the Turks would not respect the sacred refuge, we left it, and wandered on for three nights, driven from one village to another, fainting with fatigue, but not daring to make a more lengthened halt. Finally we came upon a party of Samians, flying like ourselves, whom we implored to be allowed to join. They were some of the last left of that unlucky band from the sister island, whose mad revolutionary plot had brought all this misery upon us. But no such feeling—no common compassion, indeed, for fellow sufferers—was kindled within them. They permitted us to accompany them as far as the shore, and there, like cowards as they were, abandoned us, embarking themselves in a boat which, as it was too small to hold all, they promised to send back for us Chioti, when they had reached the vessel which awaited them in the distance. But, to our agony, no sooner were they on board, than the ship hoisted its sails and was soon out of sight.

The Turks, with the object of conciliating the peasantry, who, having been treated harshly in some instances by the wealthy proprietors of Chios, were not well affected towards them, issued a proclamation during these days, stating that they only sought the

rich, and that their just resentment was not directed against the poor.

The event, alas ! proved the treacherous intent of this announcement, for the peasants, ultimately, suffered severely at the hands of these marauders ; but at the time, it led to their receiving, in many instances, the bribes of the Turks, to betray the wealthier Chiots who were in hiding.

That the peasant who now came to our help, as we lay there huddled together upon the shore, at our wits' end what course we should pursue, was actuated, in the first instance, by the base intention of delivering us up to our enemies, I do not believe. He had served our family, we had been good to him, he offered to shelter us in his cottage, and we joyfully accepted the proposition. It was while under his roof that an accident happened to me which greatly aggravated my subsequent sufferings. A child upset a kettle of boiling water over my foot, which was badly scalded. The following day we learned that the Turks were entering the village, and the door of our cottage was barred, while my family proceeded to conceal themselves under the divan which ran round the room, and upon which I lay. I was suffering too acutely to move, and trusted that our enemies might be touched by pity for my helpless condition, and would leave the house without further search. In one of these hopes I was disappointed ; they battered down the door, seized me, and, in spite of every appeal to their humanity, dragged me off between them to the spot where they and some Cretan Turks were to meet and divide their spoils.

The scene that ensued thereon was strangely melodramatic. The captain of the Cretans swore that I should be his, and, moreover,

registered a further oath that if I did not consent to accompany him there and then, he would blow out my brains. I was almost callous with mental agony and physical suffering, and to this only can I attribute the stolid courage, or indifference—call it what one will—which enabled me to say, ' Kill me, if you choose, but I will *not* go with you ; I belong to this man, who captured me, and with him will I remain.'

At this juncture, the peasant in whose house the rest of my family still remained concealed, appeared, while the two Turks were wrangling. His fidelity had not been proof against the lust for gold. ' I know where her father is,' said this man. ' He is rich, and will offer a large ransom for his daughter.' He then secretly added, ' You first captured her ; take the ransom, and let her return to my house ; then you '—turning to the Cretan—' can come and recapture her, and so both shall be satisfied.' The two Turks agreed to this arrangement, the money was fetched and handed over to my captor, and I was released, the peasant, no doubt, retaining a certain share of the spoil.

I returned with him to his dwelling, ignorant, of course, of the nefarious plot of which I was to be the victim, and anxious to rejoin my dear parents, who were still concealed there. I had scarcely crossed the threshold, however, and they had not emerged from their hiding place, when the party of Cretans arrived and captured me once more. Resistance was vain ; I gave myself up for lost. With my babe in my arms, I prepared to follow them, anxious only to spare my family the agony of seeing me maltreated, without the power of saving me, if I lingered or offered any opposition to the brutal Turks. But at this

moment some irrepressible movement of horror from my poor father, I believe, attracted their attention to the divan, under which the whole family was concealed. One of the Cretans threw the cushions on the floor, and discovered my father, mother, and sisters, together with all the treasure of gold, jewels, and plate which had been carried off in our flight. A shout of triumph burst from them as they dragged forth my old parents and my young sisters, and their eyes glistened greedily as they pounced upon the spoil now brought to light. In the excitement caused among them by the unexpected finding of this treasure, I was for the moment forgotten. I saw there was a chance—just one feeble chance—of escape. I thought of my dear husband, and then of my babe, whom I must abandon, but whose life would probably be safer without me, for they would not kill a harmless infant

The Turks had their backs to me, my old mother sat trembling beside me I hesitated a moment, and then my resolution was taken. I turned to her rapidly, and placing the baby in her arms, I whispered, 'Take it, and keep it, till you hear from me I must fly.' . . . 'How can you, my child, lame as you are?' she remonstrated. But terror, at times, can brace as well as paralyse. I scarcely knew that I was suffering as I crept through the half-open door and fled out into the darkness, whither I knew not—anywhere out of the village—anywhere away from that Cretan Turk.

I had not been gone many minutes, when he discovered my escape, and beat both my father and mother when they asserted, most truly, that they knew not where I was. I may as well state in this

place that one of my sisters was made a slave, and endured many sad vicissitudes before she regained her freedom; but into the details of her story I will not digress. My parents were despoiled of all they possessed; but their lives, together with that of my child, were not sacrificed; for they offered no resistance, and as to slavery, it was only young and handsome women who were subjected to it.

To return to myself . . . The wall which surrounded the village had but one gate, which was guarded. What was I to do? Every moment was of importance to retrace my steps was madness . . . I saw what appeared to be an empty house, and by means of a wall crawled up, I scarce know how, on to the flat roof, where I lay, half-fainting with fatigue and pain. But to stay here was impossible; in the clear summer night my form could easily be distinguished on the low house-top I crept on to the adjoining one. Here I found an opening into the building beneath, against which a ladder was set. It was perilous to descend—whither I knew not, possibly again into the hands of treacherous peasantry—but the risk must be run. I placed my trembling feet on the ladder, and began to descend into pitch darkness.

Suddenly, to my great joy, I heard the bleating of a lamb. It was followed by the lowing of a cow, disturbed by the unwonted intrusion of a stranger, and then I knew that it was a stable I was entering . . . Even now, my feet touched the straw and I felt comparatively safe if only those animals would be quiet. I took the precaution to remove the ladder, fearing that I might thus be tracked, and then I crouched down in a corner of the stable, and prayed that I might

die there, rather than be discovered.

It was not to be. The lowing of the cow had disturbed its owner, who entered the stable, and peered round, raising his lantern before him that he might penetrate the darkness. Further attempt at concealment was useless, but, as I rose to my feet, I flung my shawl over the lantern, and, half beside myself with terror, implored him, if he had a spark of humanity, not to give me up to the Turks, who were in pursuit of me. 'All I ask is to be allowed to remain here, in a corner of your stable, covered with the straw.' The man, though startled, did not take my intrusion amiss; and the event proved him to be kind and faithful, if not very courageous. He offered to take me to his wife, but I resolutely refused to leave the stable. I felt safer there, and even when the woman came, and urged my accompanying them into the house, where they would give me a bed, my terror of the Turks was too great to permit me to accept their hospitality . . . I remained in that stable for days, suffering greatly in body and mind, for my anxiety about my child was poignant, until I learned of its safety, and my burnt foot caused me acute pain, in consequence of all I had gone through. The peasant woman ascertained for me, at length, that the child and its grandmother had been released, and had left the village. But the Cretan Turk was still there, in hot pursuit of me, whom he knew must be still within its walls, and he vowed that the house which concealed me he would burn to the ground.

In the meanwhile the news of the condition of our affairs reached my husband at Smyrna. Some of the refugees from Chios brought tidings of the massacre and rapine to which our ill-fated island was a

prey. My husband's anxiety about me was intense; and (as it was impossible for him to quit his post, and return to Chios, whereby he would only have run his head into the snarer's net, without knowing even where to find me—for he learned that we had all left our home) he employed a ship to cruise about the coast, and send boats on shore whenever it was practicable, with a view of obtaining any possible information concerning me. For some time their efforts were fruitless. Nothing positive could be ascertained; some said that I had been carried off as a slave; others, that I had been saved; that my sister had been captured, and my father killed. It was just then that the Turks, finding that many of the rich Chiots had escaped them, and were, they had reason to believe, in hiding, treacherously proclaimed an amnesty, by which means they hoped to entrap all the wealthy who might still be concealed in the island.

I do not think that the peasant, in whose house I was sheltered, was a dupe to this proclamation: still, he affected to believe in its good faith. But, when it was a question of my going down to the shore, near which the ship was anchored, though he offered to lend me a donkey, he declined to accompany me himself. The sailors, with whom I managed to communicate, said, 'Come to the shore, where our boat will meet you, and you are safe.'

The thought of that solitary ride paralysed me with terror, but it was in vain that I appealed to the peasant, who had protected me faithfully so far. He was deaf to my supplications that he would escort me. He pleaded that his child had been drowned at that very landing place—no, he could not go there; his dread of the

Turks' vengeance, should they discover his complicity in my escape, being, no doubt, the real motive which actuated him. And he was wise. As it turned out, I was thankful he did not go with me; had his compassion mastered his prudence, I have no doubt but that he would, ultimately, have been butchered.

I started before daybreak on the donkey, and followed the path indicated to me, to the summit of a steep cliff overhanging the sea. It was necessary to cross this height, and descend by a circuitous route on the opposite side—unless one slid down the face of the cliff—in order to reach the shore. A crowd of fugitives was here, bound, like myself, for the good ship which lay in the offing; and among them, conceive my joy and surprise at finding my child, with my father, mother and sister. But moments were precious; we had barely time to embrace, none in which to tell our respective stories. An alarm was raised that the Turks were in pursuit. There was the landing place directly below us, and there, too, the ship's boat in waiting; but how to reach it, before the Turks could overtake us? One course alone remained. We, all of us, men, women, and children, sat and slid down the precipitous face of the cliff, regulating our course, and its rapidity, as best we could, by the bushes and tufts of grass on our way. Thank God, our entire band accomplished this without serious accident, though the agony I suffered from my scalded foot, as well as from intense thirst, I still remember. Five minutes later, and we should have been lost. We had scarcely begun to embark, when we saw the Turks on the summit of the cliff we had just left. They fired upon us, and, but for the happy suggestion of the captain of the boat,

some of us would probably have been killed. 'I have a miniature cannon here, and those Turks are arrant cowards,' said he, and, acting on the impulse, he blazed away, aiming, it is true, somewhat at random, but in the direction of the cliff, which soon prevented our pursuers from showing their faces and muskets, while we rowed away, and reached the ship in safety.

I was literally in rags, and, for decency's sake, was obliged to don the only clothes the sailors could give me, which were those of a Turkish woman. It went sorely against me to assume the garb of our hated persecutors, but there was no help for it. Curiously enough, this circumstance tended to corroborate a report which the Turk who had first captured me had disseminated in Smyrna and Tinos (where I landed), namely, that when I had escaped from him, I had robbed him to a considerable extent. My appearance in Turkish attire lent a colour to this story; it only needed the testimony of the sailors, however, to prove its falsity.

My husband, meanwhile, was wandering about, a prey to the most torturing anxiety on my account. When he failed to obtain any tidings of me through the ship he had sent to Chios, his agony of mind was so great that he could not remain in Smyrna, and he set off in a vessel for the coast of Chios, in the vague hope of obtaining some clue to my fate. But he could learn nothing; a general impression prevailed in the neighbourhood of our home that I had fallen a victim to the Turks, and though one man asserted that I had escaped, his statement needed confirmation, and was not credited. How could it be, when there did not remain a young woman of our class on the island, unless she was

plain or weakly? Hope died within my poor husband's heart. He went about from one island to another, but could learn nothing, and at last arrived at the terrible certainty that I had been massacred. As he leant over the side of the ship, and looked down into the still blue waters of the Mediterranean, he told me afterwards that he had even meditated suicide. Was it not better to seek oblivion from his misery at once, he asked himself, instead of dragging on a miserable existence alone and unloved?

He was in this frame of mind when a ship hove in sight, which, after hailing the one in which my dear husband was, brought to him the tidings of my safety in Tinos. There, in the course of a few hours, he rejoined me, and our child. We were ruined, without a home, and exiles for ever from our native island. But our lives were spared, and we were thankful. In a distant land, and with many privations and difficulties to contend with, my husband set to work to build up his fortunes

anew. God was with him, and he prospered; but Chios he never saw again—nor shall I.

It was calculated that in February 1822, Chios contained 115,000 inhabitants; in August but 1,800 remained: 23,000 had been killed, 45,000 had been carried into slavery, the remainder had escaped penniless. Some went to France (many settling in Marseilles), some to Russia, many to England. For some time they most of them entertained the hope of returning to their native homes when peace should be established. But, unfortunately for them—perhaps fortunately for their children—this was not to be. When the looked-for moment came, Chios was again placed under the yoke of the Sultan, and to this day none of the then exiled inhabitants have returned. In Trieste, Leghorn, Marseilles, and London, the fugitives gradually settled down, and were the founders of those great houses whose wealth and influence have gone on increasing unto the present day.

HAMILTON AIDÉ.



GASTRONOMICAL RAMBLES.

BY 'SARCELLE.'

NO. III.—GOOD THINGS OF GERMANY.

'It was the evening of another day,
And down the Strand we took our weary way.'

WE paused before a Bier-Halle, and let our thoughts wander back to things Teutonic, to sweet memories of Rhineland, of the merry 'Burschenschaft,' our gay student life, of the fresh, cool, light wines of Rhine and Moselle, and of the bright, creaming beer of Bavaria. It was not exactly the familiar old 'Bairisch' that was offered to us in this Strand 'Restauration,' but sufficiently akin to it to inspire us with a desire to taste it. Behind the bar a portly landlord and somewhat less portly landlady were busy dispensing barrel-shaped glasses of beer to numerous casual customers, and handing numbers of similar glasses to sundry waiters, who were attending to dining parties in a room of portentous length.

We entered the long room, took a seat at a little table, and devoted ourselves to the study of a bill of fare printed in German and English. Such names as 'Leberwurst' (liver-sausage), 'Sardellen' (anchovies), 'Braunschweiger Cervelat' (Brunswick sausage), and other little cold delicacies which figured among the 'hors d'œuvre' were familiar to me, and I knew they denoted good things. We had some anchovies with 'Butterbrod' (bread-and-butter), also some of the delicious sausage of Brunswick. Both were excellent, but not particularly cheap, the anchovies being sixpence and the sausages tenpence.

Then we got among puzzling things. Most of the dishes were familiar to me, but three certainly

were new: 'Gollash mit Nockerl,' 'Würstel mit Krean,' and 'Wiener Schnitzerl.' 'Gollash mit Nockerl' was truly delightful—the name, I mean. We cachinnated and speculated much over it, and suggested that 'slippers and scrapers' or 'pumps and door-mats' would be quite as inviting, in sound at least, as 'Goloshes and Knockers'; for so my friend, quite unversed in the Teutonic dialects, persisted in pronouncing it. But, alas! while we were sitting in anxious expectation, not unmingled with dread, as to what this new and strange food might be, the fair-haired, gentlemanly waiter, after a short colloquy at the counter, returned to us with the melancholy news that there 'was no more Gollash'! This was a blow; but we thought of the prairie-fowl at Muggeridge's, and were comforted.

Not to be entirely disappointed of novelty and outlandishness, we ordered 'Würstel mit Krean'; for though I knew very well that 'Würstel' indicated certain savoury little sausages, I had no recollection of the mysterious word 'Krean,' nor was I at all enlightened on the subject when my comrade pointed out to me, on the English side of the 'Speise-Karte,' the translation, 'Sausage and Craen.'

Now, I protest against this style of translation. The substitution of a similar-sounding initial letter and the transposition of a couple of vowels are by no means certain of success in conveying ideas. Suppose for an instant that cockles were an article of diet much in vogue

at eating-houses frequented by foreigners, would an English landlord be likely to give his stranger guests any idea of the nature of the humble bivalve by printing in his bill of fare 'Kekols'? Scarcely.

But here occurs to me a more precise illustration of this novel mode of interpreting. Let us imagine it to be early summer time, and that 'strawberries and cream' figure in the dessert. Suppose our Boniface, for the benefit of Teutonic wanderers, prints 'Erdbeeren mit *Kraem*,' how would that be? But I believe I am getting into a philological fog; for I am not at all sure that 'Kraem' is *not* German for cream.*

To return to our sausages. These savoury little articles (and uncommonly good they were) soon made their appearance, plentifully garnished with horse-radish! Who the dickens could have imagined that either 'Kraen' or 'Craen' meant horse-radish? The dish, however, was novel and nice, and the cost, I believe, was tenpence. Then we went in for 'Wiener Schnitzel.' Another disappointment. That was simply a nice little beefsteak with onions—very good, but by no means foreign.

Then we paused for a while, and took mental notes of the general aspect of the place. The waiters were three in number, well dressed, somewhat supercilious-looking, yet active withal and serviceable. The face of one of them seemed familiar to me. I looked at him again; he looked at me, and saluted me respectfully; then I knew the man.

He had been waiter at the principal hotel in a certain fair seaport of *la belle Normandie*, where I had sojourned a couple of years, and spent, oh! such a happy, merry life, in a kindly family circle, where prattling children clung to me—where our pleasures were simple,

* No, it isn't.—Ed.

but numerous, such as cruising about in my little boat the 'Rose,' catching the humble sea-fish that swarmed round our coast; taking pleasant trips inland to the banks of a fair trout-stream, fishing all day amongst the kindly, cider-drinking millers, trudging back over the hills and through the woods, with creel full of the spotted beauties; picnics at neighbouring villages, rustic sports and dances; pleasant promenades in the town, meetings with English friends, good dinners at the hotel above mentioned; then, as winter drew on, comical 'parties of chase,' organised by French sporting friends, where the behaviour of both gunners and dogs used to be very wonderful, very marvellous indeed, where I myself one day escaped the stigma of coming home 'bredouille,' by knocking over an old cock blackbird, which was accepted as 'gibier' in perfect good faith, where a stout and irascible French sportsman, drawing near to our *café* with empty 'gibecière,' fired both barrels at a white cat which ran across the road, and—missed it clean; pleasant evenings at the theatre, with, perchance, one or two little children to treat to the grand performance, perchance some noisy, witty, jovial bachelor friends to join in a wicked little *petit souper* afterwards.

But, *halte là, mon ami!* You are supposed to be writing about a certain German 'Bier-Halle' in the Strand, and behold, you make along excursion into Normandy! *Peccavi*, reader, I confess it; but the face of that man, who is now carrying an odorous *filet aux champignons* to yonder stout and respectable German couple, called to my mind all the above thoughts—ay, and many a bright thought more. Truly, my friend Franz, who now comes up and inquires kindly after my health since he saw me at Havre,

has altered his personal appearance slightly by the growth of certain whiskers since that happy time, and I—well, I have a few score of grey hairs, and the suspicion of a commencing wrinkle; and life has not been so bright for me of late as in those dear gay old Norman days, which a dull something whispers shall return ‘never more.’ So the reader, if really ‘gentle,’ will surely pardon me the digression—and—‘Kellner, eine Flasche Walportzheimer!’

‘For nought can cheer the hearts that pine
Like a deep, deep draught of the good
Rhine wine—’

Away with the bitter-sweet memories of the past, and let us seek what is gay, amusing, or pleasing in the present.

Here we have the ‘Kladderdatsch’ and ‘Berliner Wespen,’ but, faith, there is little amusement to be got out of them, with their black wood-engravings, and quaint, crabbed, familiar old characters. Comic papers, forsooth! they lack kindness and geniality; they sting more often than they tickle, and their merriment has too often, of late, been the coarse laughter of brutal conquerors taunting the gallant vanquished. So away, ye wasps of Berlin, do not buzz your sarcasms round our little table. ‘Waiter, bring me this week’s ‘Punch!’ Ah! that is better; now I can laugh, and at the same time feel at peace with my fellow-creatures—I wish, though, that yonder tall, fair-haired, bejewelled Prussian commercial travellers would not swagger quite so obtrusively as they enter the room; and surely they need not scowl at me so because they overhear me speaking to friend Franz in that despised language which they hate because they can never acquire properly either its correct pro-

nunciation, or its beautiful, wit-assisting idioms.

There is a good deal of the British bull-dog about me, my proud Prussian friends, and yet I am not ashamed of being taken for a Frenchman. But I don’t really want to abuse you; you are, doubtless, very estimable fellows in your way; and there are, doubtless, certain brown-haired, large-waisted maidens, ‘at home there in the Fatherland,’ who look upon you as the incarnations of ‘the true and the beautiful.’ But it is with your food I have to do at the present moment; and that a great deal of it is good, strong, hearty, nourishing food, I very willingly grant.

Not to bore the reader with a detailed account of several visits I paid to the ‘Restauration’ in question, I will simply enumerate a few of the things I have noticed there.

Imprimis: the Teutonic cook cannot altogether do without the language of the despised ‘Franzos’ in the arrangement of his bill of fare. The very first word we come to therein is ‘Hors d’œuvre.’ Then come ‘Suppen’ and ‘Fisch,’ which are undoubtedly German, and too like the corresponding English words to require translation. Then we get a bit of French again, in the shape of ‘Entrées’; then come the German ‘Braten,’ ‘Geflügel,’ ‘Gemüse,’ ‘Salat,’ ‘Mehlspeisen,’ ‘Käse’; or roasts, poultry, vegetables, salads, sweets, and cheese. Among the ‘hors d’œuvre’ I may mention, as particularly good, anchovies, and ‘Braunschweiger Cervelat,’ or Brunswick sausage. ‘Leberwurst,’ I know from old Rhenish experience to be a most succulent and ambrosial form of sausage; but, alas! it would appear to be only in season in the winter. ‘Russian sardines’ were a decided novelty to me. They were extracted from

a little wooden keg on the counter, which I had at first imagined to contain my beloved 'caviare.' The sardines of Russia are larger than the conventional sardine of the London grocer—larger even than those headless monsters of which there are only eight or nine in a shilling tin: larger than the beautiful, sweet, rich little fish which I used to have fresh for breakfast every morning at Nantes, St. Nazaire, and other places on that dear old Brittany coast which is famous for them. Their relatives of Russia had been subjected to no cooking process, but simply very slightly salted, and then pressed down in layers in the keg, liberally besprinkled with bay-leaves, peppercorns, mustard-seed and capsicums. *Very* tasty indeed, uncommonly hot and drouthy were these Russian sardines. There were also some 'herbs-anchovies,' a somewhat similar arrangement, but not nearly so hot. We did not notice anything peculiarly German among the soups, which were fourpence and sixpence. I had some excellent pea-soup at the former price. Different kinds of good fresh fish were to be had at eightpence and tenpence. Among the 'entrées' I have already pointed out 'Würstel mit Krea' and 'Wiener Schnitzerl,' both very good; prices, I think, respectively tenpence and a shilling. On a subsequent day I succeeded in getting hold of a real 'Gollash mit Nockerl.' It was a dish of stewed meat—I opine mutton, possibly Australian—in a rich brown gravy, flanked by two nice little dumplings—which, however, instead of preserving the traditional round shape which culinary tradition respects in England, had contrived to assimilate themselves as nearly as possible to the form of a dumpy sausage, so dear to the Teutonic mind. It was very good, but hardly so strangely and

wonderfully foreign as I could have wished. It cost tenpence, too, and was not dear. I have but few remarks to make on the rest of the bill of fare. 'Gemischter Salat' is mixed salad, the conventional salad of England. 'Kartoffel-salat' is potato-salat, which I like, but I hardly imagine it will suit English palates in general; nor should I advise novices to try 'Sauerkraut,' unless they have a sixpence to throw away.

To those simple-minded beings who still like 'sweet things,' I would say that the cook here can make a very good omelette, either 'aux confitures,' 'sucrée,' or 'au rhum'; also that the German 'Pfannkuchen' (pancakes) will compare favourably with any turned out in English households on Shrove Tuesday.

But the cheeses! They cannot really be passed over in silence, especially as several of them are very self-assertive of their existence. Here we have, among the French ones, the mild and creamy 'Bondon,' the luscious 'Camembert,' our dear, delicious, pungent old friend 'Roquefort'; while Germany sends her 'Limburg,' which smells most abominably, and tastes most delightfully, with a peculiar and original flavour purely its own; and her 'Mainzer Handkäsen,' tiny round cheeses of Mayence, perhaps more offensive in their odour than even that of Limburg, and even more piquantly delicious to the taste. I am sorry to say that they, like the 'Leberwurst,' were not obtainable at the period of the year during which these rambles were undertaken.

Before parting from my German friends, I must mention one trait of Teutonic obstinacy. On demanding our 'Rechnung,' the 'Kellner' averred that I had had three glasses of Vienna beer, my

comrade two. Now, we had each had our glasses replenished just previous to ordering cheese, and I was fully conscious of only having had *two* glasses, which my friend positively corroborated. But the waiter (not my old friend of Normandy, but a really very handsome young German, with clean-cut features, delicate complexion, and good figure) stoutly refused to admit that *he* could possibly have been mistaken. As I was equally determined not to pay for what I had not drunk, and my Teutonic adversary was firm in his obstinate refusal to be convinced, I waxed somewhat irate at last, and settled the matter by paying the exact amount of the bill—a fairly moderate one—and giving the youthful ‘Kellner’ no gratuity whatever, whereas he would otherwise have got what would have been the equivalent of the price of the disputed glass of beer. I will do him the justice to say that I believe he thought he had the right on his side, and that it was by no means a deliberate attempt at imposition. I have been there several times since; he has always been very civil, and has not made any mistake or overcharge.

Now, to conclude by giving my general opinion of the ‘Bier-Halle,’ for the benefit of English readers. It is not so cheap as Muggeridge’s; but the things are all excellent and clean, and a good dinner, in very fair German style, can be had there for about three shillings; or with a bottle of ‘the good Rhine wine,’ for about five shillings. The diner will see German society, German newspapers, &c., and if he goes up to the end of the long room, far away from the English noises of the ever-roaring Strand, he can easily fancy himself in Berlin or Vienna.

Before I dismiss the subject, let me remark that the Viennese beer here dispensed is light, sparkling, and has a slight and pleasant bitter taste; the price is threepence per glass. I do not think the glass holds quite half an imperial pint; and, however much our German friends may like to be reminded of their dear big old Vaterland, I do not think that many English beer-drinkers will care to pay an increased price for a foreign fluid, which is certainly far inferior to our own ales in strength and nourishing qualities.



OPEN! SESAME!

BY FLORENCE MARRAT (MRS. ROSS-CHURCH), AUTHOR OF 'LOVE'S CONFLICT,'
'NO INTENTIONS,' ETC., ETC.

CHAPTER XXXV.

'WHAT MAKES HER SO FIDGETY TO-NIGHT?'

THE Earl, with the assistance of his friend, reaches his own apartment, and sinks back exhausted on the sofa, helpless as a child.

'I have but one wish left,' he utters brokenly, 'to hear the hour strike that shall see my life ended, Bulwer.'

'Valence! this is a case in which you should act, not weep. Try and rouse yourself. Assert your authority as master of the Castle, and turn the man who presumes to insult you through your wife from its doors.'

'What good could I do by it?'

'All the good in the world. Show your own independence, and earn the admiration of your wife. All women love power when it is justly wielded.'

'Gain her admiration by out-raging her modesty—and for how long, Bulwer? You forget to-morrow will be the third of February.'

'And what then? You do not place any real credit in that absurd prophecy, do you?'

'Each passing moment convinces me still further it is true. No! Bulwer! the time is too near at hand. Let me die—not in peace—but at all events with the knowledge I have not made her miserable. Were Everil in real danger I might risk her anger, but by this time to-morrow she will be free to love whom she chooses.'

'And you would not stretch out your little finger, I suppose, to save her from destruction?'

'What do you mean?' cries the Earl, starting into a sitting posture.

'Suppose she were to elope with that man to-night, what then?'

'God! are you saying this only to torture me, or do you know anything—suspect anything?'

'I know nothing but what you have shown me, but surely that is enough.'

'Do you mean to insinuate that my Everil *could*—that it would be possible? Oh, no! oh, no! She is young and thoughtless—and by the very fact of marrying her I have thrown her into the way of temptation—but she is too pure, too good, too honourable. I would rather die than suspect her of such baseness.'

'*Ce n'est que le premier pas qui coûte*, and Lady Valence appears, at any rate, to have begun well.'

'Bulwer, you do her an injustice! Her first lover, the only man she ever cared for—God help me!—is near her, and dishonourable enough to whisper love into her ear. The poor child were less than a woman could she refuse even to listen. But more than this Everil would never do. I would stake my life upon it. Even now her pure heart may be reproaching her for having listened. But if I thought that he had *dared*——' and Lord Valence's hands are clenched tightly together as he says the word.

'To suggest something more than listening to her Ladyship, you mean. What would you do in that case, Valence?'



Drawn by F. A. Fraser.]

OPEN SESAME!

'As the door closes behind them, Lady Valence sinks prostrate on the floor.'



'I would tear his false tongue out of his mouth! I would place my heel upon his face, and grind it into powder!'

'What, in your present condition?'

'Heaven would lend me strength. The knowledge that my darling's mind was being corrupted—that all through her long life, though released from my presence, she would bear the scourge of an accusing conscience that would not permit her even to meet me in the other world with unabashed eyes—would imbue me with a false capacity for exertion. In that hour, Bulwer, I should be stronger than the strongest man that was ever born, even if I died the moment after I had pulverised my enemy and hers to dust.'

'Notwithstanding the prophecy.'

'Ah! that prophecy! What signifies our talking when I shall not live, perhaps, to look upon my darling's face again!'

'I will call her to you if you wish it.'

'No! no! She is happy! Let her remain so now. Only—tomorrow, should she be sleeping towards noon, Bulwer, rouse her just for one moment, that my last sweet impression of this world may be the features of her lovely face.'

'You are quite sure you shall go at noon?'

'Quite sure! Who should know better than those who have been commissioned to conduct my spirit from this world to the next?'

'And you have no doubt whatever of the trustworthiness of your spiritual messengers? You do not suppose it possible they could be mistaken?'

'If I once found what they told me to be untrue, the whole fabric of my belief in them as guardian spirits would crumble to the ground.'

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'I am glad of that,' remarks Bulwer drily.

'That they *are* spirits, and that the communications I receive through my own hand and hearing are due to some influence ulterior to my senses, no power on earth could make me disbelieve; but there are, of course, different grades of creatures in those spheres as in this, and false messages and prophecies could only come through the mouths of lying or evil spirits. It would give me infinite pain, Bulwer, to believe that I had ever had communion with such as those.'

'Even though the knowledge were attended with your prolonged existence?'

'What good is my life to me? She does not love me. No, Bulwer! let me die! My death will make her happy; my life can only make myself miserable.'

'Still here, Mr. Bulwer,' interposes the soft voice of Agatha, as she comes creeping up to the head of the sofa. 'This is good of you. But I am afraid dear Valencé must be tired. Don't you think he would be better in bed? It is past two o'clock.'

'I do not intend to go to bed to-night, Agatha; I shall remain here.'

'To what end, Valence?'

'To speak to Isola. She promised me she would visit me to-night.'

'She will not come whilst Mr. Bulwer is with you, as you well know. Had we not better go back to the ball-room, and leave you alone?'

'Perhaps you had. And yet I should have liked Bulwer to see Isola. He is so incredulous.'

'He can see her another time. You must ask her permission first, remember. Come, Mr. Bulwer.'

'Is he fit to be left by himself?'

'He has his bell, and Johnson

is within call. He will go to sleep as soon as we are gone,' she adds in a whisper.

'Why cannot Bulwer stay?' inquires the Earl as they rise to leave the apartment.

I thought you wished to see Isola. You know how timid she is with strangers.'

'Yet she came before Everil.'

'She did not like it, as she told you afterwards. But perhaps you would rather have your friend!'

'No, no! He can return to me afterwards. Leave me for a couple of hours to myself, Bulwer, and then come back to me if you choose.'

'I will not fail to do so, my dear fellow,' says the young man as he and Mrs. West step into the hall together. Under the hall lamp he grasps her wrist, and looks steadfastly into her face.

'Mrs. West! do you believe in "Isola"?''

Agatha's eyes move uneasily from beneath his gaze.

'Of course I do. I have seen her. So has Everil.'

'You believe her to be a spirit, and not a woman?'

'A woman! Oh, Mr. Bulwer, what absurd nonsense, when she can come through a keyhole or a pane of glass. Of course she is not a woman!'

'Well! I should like to see her do it,' is his rejoinder as he drops her arm and follows her into the ball-room. A waltz is in active progress. It is some time before he can distinguish Everil. When he finds her she is seated languidly upon a couch with Staunton hanging over her.

'Will you not take another turn?' Captain Staunton is saying as he comes up to them.

'No! thank you. I am tired. But I wish you would ask one of the O'Connor girls. You have not danced with either of them this

evening, and it looks so particular.'

'To hear your wishes is to obey them,' he replies gallantly, as he moves away in quest of Miss O'Connor. Then the Countess turns eagerly to Bulwer.

'How is he?'

'Very low, and quite convinced that he is sinking. But it will be all right, Lady Valence. I have ascertained that.'

'Heaven grant it! If it is only right for him, I care little what becomes of me.'

'It will be right for both of you.'

'Do you think so? I know his high sense of honour, and am not so sanguine. You are sure you understand everything?'

'Perfectly.'

'The hour we start, the place we go to?'

'Every particular.'

'And you will not fail me?'

'As there is a God in heaven! No!' replies the young man, in a low voice.

'Where is Agatha?'

'She entered the ball-room with me just now.'

'Then she has disappeared again,' replies the Countess, as her eyes wander round the apartment. 'What makes her so fidgety to-night, I wonder?'

The remark sets Bulwer wondering also. What can make Mrs. West so fidgety to-night? Why should she have appeared so anxious that he should not remain in the library and prevent the advent of the spirit Isola? If she is true to her brother-in-law, would she not hail any justifiable means by which his mind might be diverted from the subject of his approaching doom?

The more he ponders the more curious he becomes. At last he grows fidgety himself, and leaves the ball-room also. On the threshold he encounters Dr. Newall.

'Have you seen the Earl lately, Doctor?'

'I have just come from him. His pulse grows lower every hour. This is a melancholy contrast, Mr. Bulwer—feasting and dancing in one room, and death in the other.'

'You believe it is death?'

'I believe it will be, unless a miracle occurs to prevent it. Lady Valence has terribly disappointed me.'

'Do not judge her too harshly. Her anxiety itself may urge her to appear gayer than she feels.'

'A lame excuse, Mr. Bulwer, and you know it. But thank heaven the poor fellow sleeps at present and forgets all his sorrow.'

'Valence is asleep?'

'Yes; he dozed off as I was talking to him. He is so weak, he might well sleep his life away. But his valet is within call.'

'Mrs. West is with him, I suppose?'

'No; for the moment, he is alone, and I should wish him to remain so. I distrust that woman more than ever.'

'So do I,' is the earnest answer, as Bulwer slips through the crowd assembled in the doorway, and makes his way up to his own bedroom. A thought has struck him—he is resolved to put it into execution. Quietly as a mouse he changes his dancing shoes for a pair of velvet slippers, and, with a dark rug in his hand, steals down the back staircase to the lower storey. Only a few servants hanging about the corridors, to see what they can of the unusual festivities, encounter him upon his way, and he gains the library threshold unmolested. The room in which the personal attendant of Lord Valence waits in case of being wanted, although close by, is entirely divided from the larger apartment, and the door at the farther end of the

library, which is always kept locked, is covered by a heavy velvet curtain.

As John Bulwer enters he cannot hear a sound, or hardly see an object. The breathing of the Earl is too faint and weak to be audible, and the solitary lamp which burns upon the table has been turned down to its lowest point. He gropes his way cautiously to the head of the large old-fashioned sofa on which his friend lies, and crouching down behind it, covers himself with the travelling rug, and prepares to wait for what may happen. He has determined that he will see and judge of the reality of this mysterious 'Isola' for himself, and if possible penetrate what reason she can have had for foretelling evil to a man who (if the prophecy prove true) would have found it out quite soon enough for himself. He has to wait there in his uncomfortable, cramped position much longer than he anticipated or than is pleasant to himself. He hears the strains of the brass band, which has been sent for all the way from D—, strike up again and again, and the clocks sound *one*; and a noise of much rustling, and treading, and talking, as the company troop in to supper; and he is beginning to think he has come there on a wild-goose chase, when he sees the velvet *portière* that conceals the second door, which he has always been given to understand is locked, if not fastened up, move suddenly, as though pulled by a hand round which a pale light plays, and then close up again. At the same moment Valence, as if instinctively, stirs in his sleep, and then rousing, sits up on the sofa and looks about him.

'*Isola!*' he utters in a voice half of entreaty, half of awe.

A quick whisper comes from behind the curtain.

'The light! — the light! — it hurts me!'

The Earl rises languidly, and totally extinguishes the lamp, then throws himself back upon his cushions with a groan, as if that slight effort had even been too much for him. The flame from the fire is now the only light in the apartment, and it plays upon his pallid countenance and haggard features as though he were a corpse.

Bulwer ventures to uncover himself, and look eagerly towards the curtain.

In a minute or so the drapery is again agitated, and for the space of an instant a form, clad in white, appears, and disappears again.

'There is no light now, and I am alone,' murmurs Valence. 'Come to me, Isola! I am too weak to rise and go to you.'

The hangings are again parted, the form steps into the space before them, and the mysterious 'Isola' is at last revealed to Bulwer's view.

The young man feels his heart beat quicker and the blood surge to his head. He has been told, on unquestionable authority, that he stands face to face with a spirit risen from the dead; and whilst the idea is still new to him, even the most lion-hearted man would experience a slight qualm on such an introduction. Still trepidation does not deprive him of his senses as it did Everil. He trembles, but he can observe, and his observation is rewarded. The form that stands before him is worth looking at.

Slight and small in figure, and draped in some white, soft, cloudy material, that hangs loosely about every part, and yet seems to envelop all, 'Isola' is the embodiment of what a fanciful imagination might conjure up as the appearance of a visitant from the

other world. Her golden hair rippled loosely to her knees; her features are not so distinct as Bulwer would wish to have them, because her head and shoulders seem to be covered with a veil that looks like black *crêpe*; but her bare arms are deadly white and bloodless-looking; and in one hand she bears a small antique lamp, the dimly-burning wick of which just shows sufficient light upon her person to render it mysteriously unrecognisable except as a whole. But Valence seems to have no difficulty in recognising his visitor.

'True to the last!' he murmurs. 'My faithful Isola, your task will soon be over, and your weary charge set free. But why do you look so mournfully to-night? What is the meaning of that dark veil about your head?'

'I come to earth,' replies the apparition, speaking in a low, hissing whisper, which renders it impossible to note the quality of her voice, 'and I adopt her customs. She will mourn, whilst we rejoice.'

'Will you stay with me to the end?'

'I cannot stay. My services are needed elsewhere. But as your spirit leaves the body it will encounter mine.'

'And then I shall be free from all trouble, and sorrow, and disappointment for ever! Isola, is the time certain? Is there no possibility of its being altered?'

'The fiat has gone forth—there is no possibility of change.'

'And you will be glad to receive me, will you not? You will be ready to welcome me to those spheres where I shall again encounter my beloved father and my brother? Oh! tell me, Isola, that *some one* will rejoice! That, though I leave none to regret me upon earth, I shall find the affection my soul longs for *there*!'

'It waits for you,' is the low

reply, 'and you will realise it to-morrow—at noon. Farewell!'

'Stay, Isola—stay one moment! For the last two years you have been preparing my mind for the event so near at hand; but during all that time you have never let me touch you, nor even approach you nearer than I am now. Other spirits have handled me, written through me, and spoken to me. You only, of all my spiritual friends, have denied me this privilege. Why is it so?'

'I am not formed like other spirits. They are, except for a hand or a voice, for the most part intangible. My immortal part is clothed upon with an emanation from your own substance, and you could not approach too near or handle me without injuring yourself.'

'What signifies an injury to a man with one foot in the grave? By this time to-morrow I too shall be intangible. But let me touch you to-night. I am still mortal, and this desire is strong on me.'

'It must not be,' says Isola, as she commences to back towards the velvet *portiere*.

'Then come nearer to me. I would not willingly offend you; but how can I tell that in the spirit world you will appear to me as you do now? Let me have a proof before I go that you are all you have said yourself to be.'

'A proof! and at this hour!'

'Yes! I want it. The wish has come on me suddenly, but strongly. Pass over my sofa, Isola—walk through me—or float out of the window. Do something to show me that you are beyond my finite comprehension.'

Bulwer is watching the apparition closely. He, too, is waiting anxiously to see the upshot of his friend's request.

'To-morrow—at noon!' is all the

spirit answers, as she begins to glide away.

'You will not do it for me, Isola!' exclaims the Earl hotly. 'You will even let me die, wrapped round with this mysterious, wavering credulity, which says one moment that "*it is*," and the next "*it cannot be*."'

'The proofs are coming—coming—coming!—to-morrow—at noon,' whispers the fast-receding phantom.

'By heavens! I will have them now,' exclaims Lord Valence, as he starts from his couch and advances towards the white-draped figure. In a moment it has vanished behind the heavy curtain, and he is left standing in the middle of the room alone.

Bulwer feels that his opportunity has arrived. With the speed of lightning he leaves his hiding-place, and gains the outside of the library-door before the Earl has staggered back into his seat.

The company are returning from the supper-table, and the corridor is filled with guests. Bulwer gives himself no time for thought or ceremony, but rushing past them in his slippered feet, gains the upper corridor, the farther end of which he knows is the only communication (except that which leads to the kitchen offices) with the passage upon which opens the velvet-curtained door in the Earl's library.

He reaches it breathless—but in time. Just as he turns into it, the Apparition noiselessly appears at the other end, and seems about to make for the upper storey. He rushes heedlessly to meet it. It sees him—pauses—and then turning, flees swiftly down the staircase by which it has ascended.

Bulwer, regardless of all consequences, pursues and overtakes it on the threshold of the locked door of the library.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

'YOU WILL KNOW, HUSBAND, THAT
I HAVE LOVED YOU.'

THE ball is still at its height, though the first grey streaks of dawn have commenced to peer through the unshuttered windows of the Castle, when John Bulwer persuades the Earl to lie down upon his bed.

'It will rest you to take off your clothes, Valence, even if you do not feel inclined to sleep.'

'Just as you like, dear Bulwer. It makes no difference to me. The object for which I waited here is accomplished.'

He leans as heavily on his friend's arm, as they toil up the staircase together, as though he were about to sink through the ground.

'This is the last time I shall need to bear all my weight on you, Bulwer. I shall soon be able to walk by myself. What o'clock is it? How light the corridor appears!'

'It is just two.'

'So late! and they are not yet tired of dancing! Some one is leaning against the door of my room. It must be one of the servants fallen asleep though fatigued.'

But it is not one of the servants. It is Lady Valence. At the sight of her, even under such painful circumstances as these, his pale face flushes and looks glad.

'Everil! can it be you? What is the matter? Are you ill?'

She starts and is silent, trembling too much for speech, as Bulwer can well perceive, as she stands before them, grey and ashen in the uncertain light. He slips his arm from beneath that of his friend, and passes from them into an adjoining room.

'Ill! of course not! What on earth should make me ill?'

'But you are shaking. You must be terribly cold, standing in this draughty passage, and with nothing on your neck and shoulders. Oh! take care of yourself, Everil, for '—'my sake,' he is about to say, but he alters the expression—'for the sake of all who love you!'

'They are not many,' she laughs carelessly.

'They ought to be! But why have you left the ball-room?'

'I was tired. I wanted rest. I thought you were in bed long ago.'

'No. I cannot rest! But I shall soon!—I shall soon! Will you come and see me, Everil, before I go?' he continues, gently, as he lays his hand upon her arm.

'Before you go—where?'

'Where God pleases! Before I am called to leave you, I should have said. It will not be many hours longer now. You have not forgotten this is the third of February.'

She seizes his hand passionately. A wan, hungry look has come into her eyes. She is about, apparently, to cast herself upon his neck and strain him to her bosom—when she stops, and laughs derisively.

'How can you talk such nonsense! The third of Fiddlesticks! Valence! I have no patience with you!'

'I do not ask it of you now,' he returns slowly; 'only give it to my memory to-morrow, with pardon for all the trouble I have unwittingly brought upon your head. Believe me, Everil, that when I married you, I did not know—*what I know now*—or I should have exercised a spirit of greater generosity and forbearance towards you. The past cannot be undone; but in the future, remember that my last prayer was for your happiness and prosperity!'

He walks slowly from her as he speaks, and passes into the room beyond, where Bulwer is waiting to receive him. As the door closes upon her, Lady Valence sinks prostrate on the floor, and moans in the extremity of her pain.

'Oh! why did I not adopt the other course at once, and kill myself by inches? My death might have aroused him as effectually as the thought of my dishonour, and been less painful to look back upon. How kind he is! How patient—noble—generous! And he believes I can desert him! He believes that all my protestations of affection were so many falsehoods, concocted perhaps for the very purpose of covering my love for Staunton! How shall I undeceive him?—how ever convince him that I have but been acting a part in order to save his precious life?

'Perhaps *never*! Perhaps all his life long he will consider that I have betrayed him! But if I may but live to see him live, I shall have my reward. And some day—when all the mistakes of this world are set right—you will know, Valence—husband!—dearest!—that I *have* loved you!

She rises to a kneeling position, and presses her lips against the panels of the door that separates them; then hastily dries her streaming eyes, and passes into the open corridor again.

At its extremity she encounters Captain Staunton. He is in a flurry, and seems to have been seeking her.

'Not changed your dress yet, Everil! Do make haste! Everything is ready, and your guests are beginning to leave. This is just the time for us to slip away unnoticed.'

'I will be ready in a quarter of an hour.'

'Your absence may be observed before then, and it is no use anticipating a scandal. How red your eyes are! Have you been crying?'

'A little. It is an important step I am about to take.'

'But I cannot have you weep over it, or I shall think you are an unwilling captive. Come! let me kiss those tears away.'

But she shrinks from his embrace, as though it had been that of her bitterest enemy.

'Do not touch me! Some one may be watching us! I will go and tell my maid to get ready, and we will join you in the west corridor in less than half an hour.'

'Your maid! You surely do not intend to take her with you, Everil?'

'Indeed I do. I never travel anywhere without her.'

'But under these circumstances——'

'I should imagine it will make little difference who sees us fly or not. Will not all the world know it before noon?'

'You must do as you choose, but I consider it quite unnecessary. In twenty minutes, then, let us say, in the west corridor. I will be sure to meet you there.'

He turns away as he finishes his sentence; and Lady Valence walks slowly to her own apartment, where the maid, dressed in a dark bonnet, and shawl and veil, is waiting for her.

'Oh, you are ready! Have you got out my things?'

'Which do you mean to wear?'

'The oldest, darkest, shabbiest apparel I may happen to possess, as is fit for the darkest and shabbiest deed I have ever committed.'

'Don't lose heart now that it is so nearly over,' observes the maid.

The tone of her voice is so familiar that it is surprising Lady Valence does not resent it; but, on

the contrary, she does not even appear to notice the change. .

Perhaps she is smitten with a self-consciousness that the insult is not undeserved: perhaps she is unwilling to alienate the only creature who countenances the offence she contemplates.

No further conversation passes between them as the waiting-woman disencumbers her mistress of her ball-dress and jewelry, and, robing her in a simple black silk, throws a furred cloak about her shoulders. Only when the last preparations are completed, and they are ready to steal downstairs, hand-in-hand, like two guilty creatures bent on the same deed of infamy, Everil turns suddenly to her companion, and says:

'After all, you had better not go with me. Why should I compromise you, in order to assist my own ends?'

'I am determined to go with you, so it is no use saying anything more about it. Do you not see that my presence is necessary to your success?'

'But suppose my efforts end in defeat, and I drag you down with me?'

'There is no probability of that; but if there were, I am ready to risk it.'

'Oh! thank you so much for saying so! You are the only creature I know that would do as much for me.' And Lady Valence actually stoops down and salutes her maid upon the forehead. Then,

after a few tears and kisses, they leave the apartment softly and reach the western corridor unnoticed.

Maurice Staunton comes forward to receive them.

'I suppose your maid knows all, Everil?'

'All.'

'And she is trustworthy?'

'I shall not give her the opportunity of being otherwise. She will travel inside the carriage with ourselves.'

'Denceed inconvenient!' mutters the Captain.

'I wish it to be so,' is the dignified reply; and he considers that the discomfort will be but temporary, and makes no further objection to it.

A few minutes later, a dark travelling-carriage with post-horses—not unlike many that have conveyed their loads of papas and mammas and pretty daughters to the Castle that evening—rolls over the draw-bridge and through the park gates, without exciting much suspicion in the mind of any one.

And no one discovers that Lady Valence has left her home until the last guest has departed, and Agatha West, desirous of ascertaining if the hostess's early retirement is due to sudden illness, enters her sleeping apartment—now at some distance from that of the Earl—and finds a note upon her toilet-table to tell her of the disgrace which has fallen on the house of Valence.

(To be continued.)



WEST END NOTES.

AMATEURS—FREAKS OF FASHION—ELISE—PRINCE'S—A NEW MANSION—DOGS—
AUTOGRAPHS—THE GERMAN REEDS—AN AMENDE—'KINDLY LENT.'

THE present age may be hereafter recollected as the age of amateurs—that is, of the competition of those who do a thing occasionally with those who do the same thing regularly. Not a very logical definition, it will be said; but amateurship is a difficult thing to define with nice precision. The real inferiority—the gap that always lies open between the amateur and the regular—is the fact of the first not being enrolled in the ranks, of his not serving with the main body; and thus he is not inspired with the *esprit de corps*, or the traditions and spirit of discipline. This herd of unlicensed auxiliaries darkens the horizon; actors, painters, musicians, even shopkeepers. The amateur affects to do everything. They, of all the human race, are the most ready to rush in where angels fear to tread. Mr. Ruskin, or, better still, Mr. Carlyle, could write a scathing essay on this class, which could certainly be brought under the great category of *shams*. Its utter weakness was never so favourably exhibited as at the last and final International Exhibition, when some officers, who had a taste for the arts, bethought them of exhibiting their talents. The result was the most extraordinary collection of weak performances—more pretentious than, but scarcely superior to, the show of young ladies' works on a 'parents' day' at a fashionable boarding-school. We all know some clever Captain X——, who, as the ladies protest, draws so beautifully, and who lends his portfolio of sunsets in India, views of Malta, &c. There is one artist in the service who has certainly

fecundity, and whose sketches of Indian battles, Indian life, and stag-hunting pursue us to many a provincial exhibition. These seem to be washed in with a bluish ink and water for colour, a pen being used for the outlines; and the sight of them causes an artistic shudder. The officer with a comic turn, whose sketches should be sent to 'Punch,' is in consequence no less tedious and inefficient. He is sometimes flattered into publishing a series of 'Fishing Scenes in Norway,' 'Deer-stalking in the Highlands,' each sketch having a diverting description in lithographic handwriting underneath—'Jones takes his morning tub under difficulties,' 'Brown astonishes the natives,' and such mild jests; though in this category must not be placed a spirited series of sketches of a yacht voyage, lately seen in that well-known shop in St. James' Street, done with a firm touch, and much variety. They are the work of Mr. Burrowes, and would inspire any one with an *envie* for a voyage in a yacht.

The theatrical amateurs are a more important and importunate class. There are some who have actually made a profession of this amateuring, and who cannot 'play for you'—this is the phrase—as they have so many 'engagements' in all parts of the country. They generally perform in such pieces as 'The Happy Pair,' 'Cut off with a Shilling,' 'A Regular Fix,' and others; and like real actors, they will 'go down to play' before unfamiliar audiences, and in houses to which they are actually unknown. From long practice, these gentlemen have acquired all the *sang froid* and

much of the haughty exigence of the 'star': they arrive with a certain bustle and peremptoriness, and make the 'requisitions' they want with the quick, sharp precision of the German Etappen Commando. How they talk of being 'letter-perfect,' and of 'taking the stage,' of 'O. P.,' and 'getting off!' In the metropolis there are a vast number of clubs: the 'Comus,' 'The Kemble,' and others. The grand ambition is to secure the good graces of the benevolent Mr. Coe, and reach the boards of the Haymarket on some 'off' night during *relache*, when that useful official marshals, for some inscrutable end, his 'scratch' squad. Now they can enjoy the luxury of saying familiarly, 'I'll speak to Coe about it.' The little Royalty is also occasionally favoured with these experiments. These clubs must be nests—hornets' ones—of jealousy and histrionic hate. They abound in comic men, who all can play the same parts.

Amateur ladies are infinitely more capable, because having less pretence and more nature. Ladies also have less *mauvaise honte*; and just as they acquit themselves in a drawing-room under awkward circumstances infinitely better than a man, so on the boards they can be earnest and natural. How often have we seen some fair dame go through her part with a native grace and effort, owing to a simple earnestness and absence of affectation!

How dull are certain private theatricals, with the invariable comic man, who has nothing comic, but who makes up for its lack by energy, noise, and grimace; and that more objectionable being still, who 'knows Wigan,' and is understood—by himself—to act quite as well; who speaks in a slow, collected style, 'as a gentleman, you know, would in a drawing-room,' work-

ing a good deal with his eyes. The man 'who knows Wigan' is generally tedious, and fortunately not popular. It is curious that the more elaborately amateur performances are 'got up,' the duller they are. Great mistakes are usually committed in the selection of a piece. I have seen a kind of French melodrama, representing the sufferings of a blind girl, tragic speeches, &c., given in a drawing-room, with screens and bedroom curtains for scenery. The pieces should invariably be of a drawing-room kind, and turning on incidents that usually take place there.

If your leading amateur actor would not be too exuberantly comical, he might be fairly tolerable; but he is so enchanted with what he is going to do, that he cannot restrain himself. Who has not seen the Bill, headed pompously, 'Beaucourt Castle—Christmas. Manager, Mr. Sydney Cox' (a leading *comique*), who makes all the young ladies 'die'; while Sir Horace Beaucourt is put down as 'box-keeper,' or 'check-taker,' which is considered exquisitely droll; the 'Orchestra led by Lady Beaucourt,' who is of course treated with a chivalrous respect. Do we not recall the extraordinary delight as the piece proceeds? and the assurances, 'It's going splendidly!' the host rushing behind to say, 'First-rate! Vivian hit them hard in that scene!'—the general tendency being to embrace, every one is so delighted. I once assisted at a performance where the hostess and two gentlemen performed a French *proverbe* in the original language, and when two *attachés* at Albert Gate were heard to ask each other innocently 'what language the actors were talking?'

Shakespeare himself was, no doubt, teased by the assumption of the amateur actor of his day; for

Bully Bottom exhibits all the weak points of the character. Thus says Bottom, while accepting his part of a lover, 'That will ask some tears in the true performing of it. If I do it, let the audience look to their eyes. . . . Yet my chief humour is for a tyrant: I could play Ercles rarely;' and then breaks into a quotation from a tragedy, 'The raging rocks, with shivering shocks,' &c. Compare our friend at rehearsal: 'Yes, I could hit them hard in that; but it's a deuced hard part, I can tell you; one of the most difficult on the stage. By Jove, though, I wish it was Desmaret, in Tom Taylor's "Plot and Passion!" That's my line. I played it once at Beau-court: "I have ye in my power now!"—that was the way Robson did it.' Again, Bottom wishes to take the Lion also: 'Let me play the lion too; I will roar that I will do any man's heart good to hear me.' So our amateur is equally greedy: 'If you wish, I could come on as the officer—a small part, but it requires to be well done. Yes, I could change in a minute.' Then Bottom asks, 'What beard were I best to play it in?' and is told, 'Why, what you will:' on which he says, 'I will discharge it in either your straw-coloured beard, orange-tawny beard, your French crown-colour beard,' &c. Is not this our amateur, all over? 'How shall I make up for the part?' having settled already how; the host saying, smilingly, 'Well, you know best.' He must exhibit his versatility: 'I have "made it up" all sorts of ways. I once played it with a moustache; another time I had a regular false forehead,' &c. At the rehearsal, when Bottom says, 'There are things in this comedy that will never please—the drawing of a sword, for instance, which might frighten the ladies,' one might think that

this was in the interest of the play; but Nick Bottom was a true amateur, and only thought of himself: 'I have a device to make all well. Write me a prologue to tell them that Pyramus is not killed—and, for the more better assurance, tell them that I, Pyramus, am not Pyramus, but Bottom, the weaver; that will put them out of all fear.' Who has not heard this at rehearsal? 'Leave it all to me, my dear boy. I'll just gag a little here. *I'll* come out and tell the audience, you know,' &c. '*I'll* carry you through there,' &c. 'They know *me*,' &c. 'That will put them out of all fear.' If one of the company is to have a small part—that of the Lion—the leading amateur objects: 'Masters, you ought to consider with yourselves: to bring in, God shield us! a lion among ladies, is a most dreadful thing. We ought to look to it;' which at the country-house takes the shape of: 'I think you must cut that out of your part, Dobson; it won't go with the audience: I know it won't. I'll tell you what you can do,' &c. Then there are the difficulties as to the Wall and the Moonlight, which our amateur, like Bottom, disposes of off-hand: 'Get a few properties,' &c. 'I'll tell you what you must do,' &c. But what has the 'Divine Williams' not unriddled or anticipated?

Very familiar to the amateur histrionic world is Cromwell House, where there is a theatre built specially; an 'auditorium'—odious word—that will hold five or six hundred people; and where there have been some excellent performances—in dramas, tableaux, and the like. Here have Mr. Millais and Mr. Val Prinsep directed and designed scenery. Here Mr. Dickens, but a short time before his death—with that inimitable power of stage management which he possessed—rehearsed and di-

rected plays in which his own family performed. Sir Percy Shelley also has an almost perfect theatre, where a piece can be mounted in true professional style.

There are amateurs of other callings—the steeplechase rider, like the famous ‘Mr. Thomas,’ the pilot of that little horse, ‘The Lamb’; the fashionable portrait-painter, like Mr. Graves; and the well-known cricketing brothers. The position of these latter seems not a little ambiguous. There is the air of amateurship, and the ‘Corinthian’ privileges that result; yet their devotion to the game is as wholesale as though it were a regular calling. Are they in the ranks of those who, living to please, must please to live? After all, this perpetually ‘being to leg’—whatever that means—with ‘Daft’ and ‘Jupp,’ must tend to levelling to a certain extent. A ‘noble’ game is all very well; but there might be worthier callings than travelling about the country, and devoting a life that might be usefully employed to ‘drives’ and ‘catching at leg.’

What luxurious days these are!—the best proof, perhaps, being the innumerable ‘coaches-and-four,’ the most extravagant toy of the time. There are even second-class ‘coaching clubs.’ There is another sign and token of luxury in the beaver-fur capes on the shoulders of coachmen and footmen—an idea imported from France. Indeed, we are imitating that country too closely in some fantastic devices that are nonsensical. Christmas and New Year’s presents have been developed sufficiently in the almost reckless variety of children’s toys. Now we find the shops filled with those ridiculous Easter eggs—a fancy artfully fostered by the tradesmen in knickknacks. Here

are gigantic eggs, as large as a pillow, and found to contain a huge doll, with her trousseau and the entire furniture for a house, down to the crockery! At a French shop we see a toy fowl, seated on a number of eggs, in a lovely and costly *berceau*. This folly might be thought sufficient for the day. But was there not the first of April—All Fools’ Day? To be sure. There is some joke as to a *poisson d’Avril*, and accordingly the toy-shops fill with imitation fishes, each a case for more costly trumpery. With all the wretchedness about us—miserable creatures famishing or dying of starvation at the East End and elsewhere; wanting clothes, food, education, everything—only fancy the foolish, unthinking beings who arrive to squander their guineas on ‘April fish’!

If the French boast of their Wörth, we have our Elise—a lady with an enormous and promiscuous *clientèle*. Royalty and royalties, princes, the City, all are in her books. A prodigious personage! Her temple is a bower of lace, where her young ladies sit, and attend the august customers with far less fuss than do the familiars of the great marts close by. To a person of proper *ton*, Madame Elise is as indispensable as the Parson himself. That tremendous *modiste* absent, there would surely be a flaw in the contract, and the parties be haunted for the rest of their lives with the uneasy feeling that it was at least irregular. And yet this great lady, like all first-class workwomen, is almost cheaper, for what she supplies, than the professedly cheap establishments. Cut, material, fit, are of the best. *Credo experto*—the present writer having had business transactions with her. For

five-and-twenty pounds she will fit your wife or sister with a silk dress that is a triumph of workmanship, and a work of art.

Prince's, recruited in numbers and quality, is getting ready for what, perhaps, will be its best season. The most amazing thing is to see elderly spinsters careering about on little wheels and making a respectable figure. On the other hand, a lady lately fell on her face, fracturing, it was said, her nose. She was led out, a piteous spectacle, covered with blood.

Sir Richard Wallace's mansion in Manchester Square is now completed, after alteration and extension. This was the old Hertford House, where the Prince Regent's carriage was seen so often standing, and where reigned the mature dame whose influence was so extraordinary, but whose conduct was perfectly correct. The restoration is not to be admired, and shows no architectural refinement, or, indeed, pretension of any kind. It has, indeed, a sort of factory air. Most unpleasant of all, is a mysterious gap at one side, all lined with white tiles, like a washing-place. Reform that altogether, we conjure you, Sir Richard! The bricks are all 'pointed'—always a sure test of an architect's taste. It is, however, a vast pile, and the new picture-gallery seems of great capacity.

It is pleasant to see the growing esteem and respect into which one lowly class of our fellow-creatures are rising. Their interests are protected by Acts of Parliament, and they are rated, like the rest of us, in support of the State. I allude to our amiable and estimable fellow-citizens and four-footed friends, the dogs. Is it fanciful to say that under kind

and friendly treatment—this Relief Bill, which has struck off their fetters—they seem to grow more sagacious and intelligent—more inclined to exchange ideas with us? A few feet from me at this moment is a curious specimen of the long-backed, short-legged German hound yclept a turnspit, who came to the establishment a silent, reserved, even dull being. But on fair encouragement his faculties became developed. He showed signs of a humorous disposition—as though he could relish a jest—and began to utter mysteriously uncouth and cavernous sounds, as though labouring to find an utterance. These began gradually to take the shape of expostulation, angry remonstrance, piteous entreaty, weariness, to say nothing of literal yawns, when he was bored. They are wonderful creatures, even in London, with curious, puzzling ways of their own. Thus, lately one dark night, the writer, entering a Hansom cab, was duly encased within the glass and shutters. As the vehicle shot off on its course, something white appeared to flash on the footboard in front, which by-and-by resolved itself into the outline of a greyish-white cur dog, who had leaped up in a half-professional way, much as the little tigers of another generation used to skip up behind the cabriolet. There this curious creature remained, poising itself at the edge, like some spectral dog, and balancing itself with ease, as a circus rider would. When the cab stopped, he was gone as suddenly as he came. 'Oh! he were there, were he?' the driver merely exclaimed. It turned out that this lean and unkempt pariah had drawn near the cab a few nights before, had received less churlish greeting than what he was accustomed to, and had attached himself to the cab in this mysterious way,

and was now actually to be seen hovering in the shadow afar off. There was something ghostly in the fashion in which he came out of the night and appeared upon the footboard. Again. I was once acquainted with a dog that had a no less singular *penchant* for seeing a train pass under an arch at a particular hour each day. Punctually at five o'clock he would rouse himself and set off at full speed to keep his appointment, using cunning devices when he suspected he might be detained. Having seen his train go by, and looked down with a wary and critical air to see that the passage was performed properly, he jogged home with a contented mind. How did he know the hour so exactly? Again. Every morning there comes to the door one of the neatest, lightest, and best-appointed little traps conceivable, in the service of our buttermilkman. It is drawn by a frisky, waggish little pony, evidently a pet; and on the pony's back rides a vivacious little terrier, who, from practice, can balance himself in a secure and dashing style. Both pony and terrier understand each other, though the terrier capers about the pony's neck in an inconvenient fashion. On cold days pony has his cloth, while terrier has a miniature covering of the same kind, securely fitted to his person. When the buttermilkman comes up the area the sly pair are watching him, and if in his hurry he incautiously slam the back-door of his cart, a pretence is made of accepting the noise as a signal, and off starts pony galloping, terrier barking and almost erect on pony's neck, while driver is running along frantically striving to climb into his vehicle as it goes. Another dog, a red Irish retriever, whose acquaintance I made lately,

was sent down forty miles into Kent, shut up in a dog-box. On his first day's sport, he took offence at the keeper using a whip to him: a freedom he perhaps thought was not justified by so short an acquaintance. The following morning he was at the door of his house in Victoria Street! How was this accomplished? He must have come straight across the country, guided by some faculty that his two-legged superiors have not.

It is a pity that these noble creatures can never know how much they owe to their faithful and trusty advocate Dickens. How delightful and characteristic are the animals that figure in his writings—the 'Boxers' and others—beside which Scott's dogs seem very tame and conventional. It must always be remembered that most dogs are *humourists*; so that the odd term, at exhibitions, the 'Clown Dog,' is not inappropriate. Before me now is a letter, written to me just ten years ago by the great master, in praise of one of his dogs, a huge Spanish mastiff of massive build and yellow colour. 'Sultan,' he writes, 'has grown immensely, and is a sight; but he is so accurately fierce towards other dogs that I am obliged to take him out muzzled. Also, he has an invincible repugnance to soldiers, which, in a military country, is inconvenient. Such is the spirit of the dog that, with his muzzle tight on, he darted into the heart of a company of soldiers in heavy marching order (only the other day), and pulled down an objectionable private. Except under such provocation, he is as gentle and docile with me as a dog can possibly be. Last night the gardener fired upon some man in the garden upon whom he came suddenly, and who kicked him in a

dangerous manner. I immediately turned out, unloosed Sultan, and hunted the vagabond. We couldn't get hold of him, but the intelligence of the dog, and the delighted confidence he imparted to me as we travelled across country in the dark were quite enchanting. Two policemen appearing in the distance, and making a professional show of stalking, had a narrow escape. As he was in the act of flying at them, I was obliged to hold him round the neck with both arms (like the little boy in the snow with the St. Bernard dog grown up), and call to the force to vanish in an inglorious manner. A friend has sent me from America a thoroughbred young black Newfoundland dog since you were here. Sultan (who hates him mortally), he, Linda, I, and three or four small dogs, in the nature of canine parasites and toadies, make a show in the lanes and roads, which I specially beseech you to come and see.' Later, perhaps the Man in the Mask may tell his readers a little more of these delightful dogs.

Apropos of autograph letters, I was lately looking at some of Charles Lamb's, in one of which he calls Hazlitt 'that half-Hogarth.' Another is signed 'Scribbled midnight.' And, again: 'I think Southey will give us a lift in that damned "Quarterly." I meditate an attack on that cobbler, Gifford, which shall appear immediately after any favourable mention which S. may make in the "Quarterly."' Good autographs now fetch enormous prices. For the autograph of a very average author or personage there is a market price—two shillings—what dealers call a 'holograph.' A letter of Sterne's sold the other day for 20*l.*; one of Burns's for 60*l.* It must be remembered that a letter writ-

ten by any one who has had cleverness enough to raise himself a little over the crowd is interesting, or, at least, characteristic. But, apart from this, the letters of a manager, actor, singer, or painter are certain to have some kind of interest; and what has interest is saleable. The autograph catalogues issued by Messrs. Sotheby, and Mr. Waller, of Fleet Street, give extracts from the letters, and are singularly piquant. When there is a sale announced at Puttick's (Sir Joshua's old house in Leicester Square), or some other *chirographopoles*, I attend on the days when the letters are on view, and have curious pleasure in turning over these faded scrolls. Lately I thus came upon some long letters addressed by Nelson's niece—daughter to the obsequious Dean—to Lady Hamilton. Nothing could exceed their almost abject subservience—no doubt written under the inspiration of the clergyman and his lady. All their movements from town or country, their parties, &c., were described and submitted to her approbation.

For an unpretending entertainment there is hardly anything in London so finished as the 'German Reed' performances. There is no better artist in her line than Mrs. German Reed, and the variety she succeeds in imparting to the numerous old ladies she plays shows that she has the skill of a true actress. Admirable, too, is Mr. Corney Grain's little *inter-mezzo*, done with the lightest touch, the imitation being rather a mental suggestion than founded on the more vulgar realism which the hack-imitators affect. A more legitimate and enjoyable bit of satire than his delineation of the music-hall singer cannot be conceived. From such a text we

could illustrate the real theory of satiric art, of which actors are profoundly ignorant.

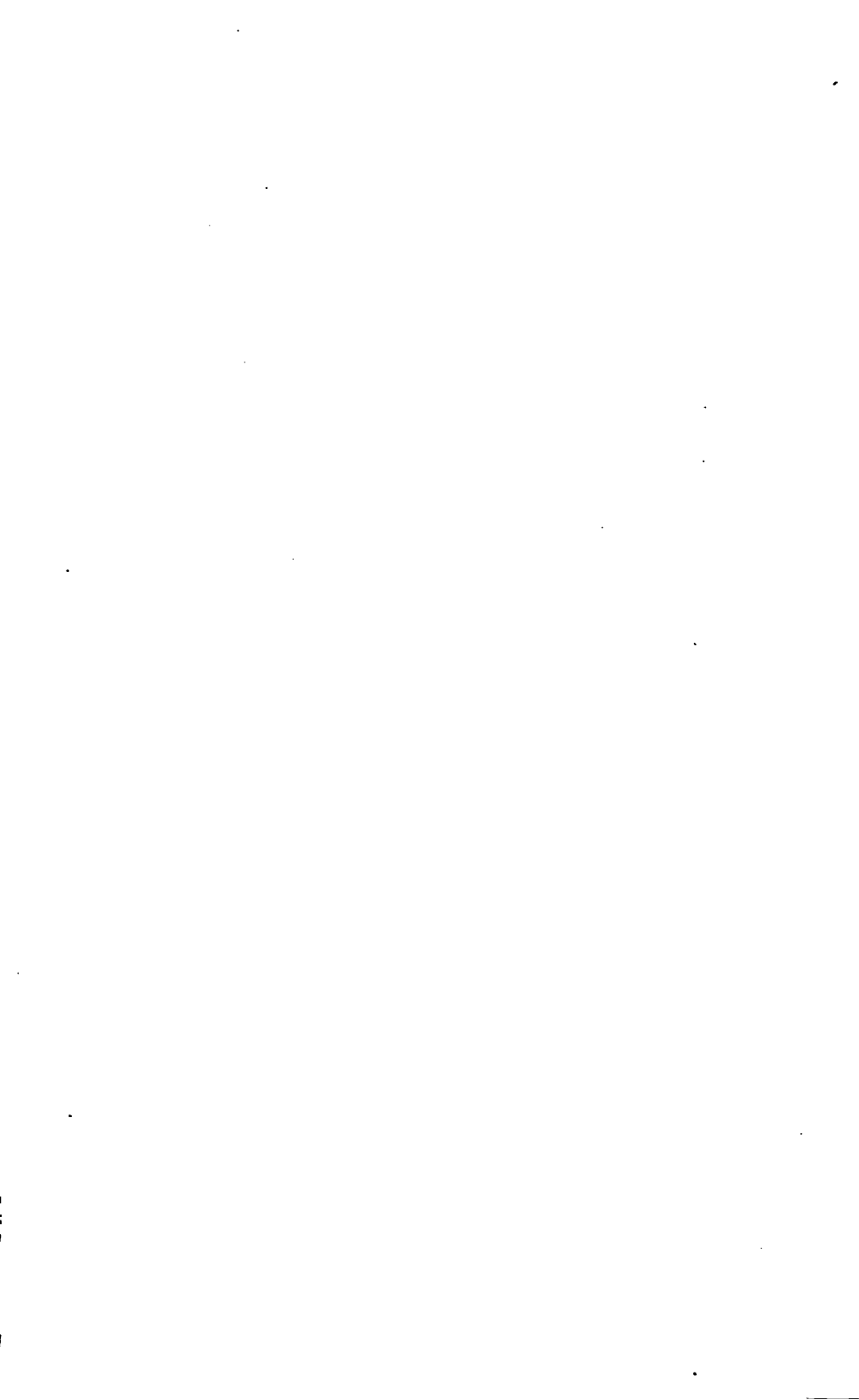
The injustice done in reviewing was never so satisfactorily illustrated as in the case of a notice of the Life of a deceased Irish Chancellor that lately appeared in the 'Times.' 'This work,' said the reviewer, 'contains some very odd blunders. For instance, what does the author mean by saying, with the example of Lord O'Hagan before him, "that no holder of the great seal in Ireland has been a Peer since the time of Lord Plunket"?' The fact was, the author had actually made this exception! But, instead of an apology being offered for this very unwarrantable attack—for it was not the case of a mistake, but of a mistaken accusation—the author's protest was hidden away among some occasional scraps of news, and introduced with a 'Mr. — writes to us,' &c. These are the happy tests—as when a mistake has to be handsomely owned—by which we try the boasted fairness of a public journal.

A little essay might be written on what might be called 'advertisement gratitude.' This virtue, rare enough in social life, is effusively displayed in print. Who cares to know whether one manager has obliged another by 'kindly permitting' an actor to play? At a late 'scratch' performance there were to be counted about a dozen of these 'kind permissions,' each manager being set out with 'Esquire' and full title. On the recent opening of a theatre, we were told in the bills that a well-known fashionable artist, and a favourite Academy exhibitor, 'had most kindly volunteered to furnish the designs for the new act drop, which will be painted by himself,' &c. Why did the artist allow his name to be

affixed, and the fact of thus 'kindly volunteering' to be placed on posters? His friends will, no doubt, say, 'he wished to help the manager'—'his name, you know,' &c. Infinitely more ridiculous was a portion of the play-bill of the last Drury Lane pantomime. Amid the announcements of the Realms of Jewels, and of the antics of the Vokes Family, it was given out that there would be introduced 'a beautiful Persian melody.' The air, as it proved, was of average attractiveness. But that was not enough. We were told that it was—sung by? No. Composed by, even arranged by? No. It sounds incredible; but the air was 'kindly lent by —, Esq., M.A.' (!) Why not 'kindly copied by —' &c.? Some of these days we shall perhaps read, 'The suitability of "Waverley" as a subject for dramatization most kindly pointed out to Mr. Halliday by —, Esq., M.A.' Again, when the banal 'reporting' of the boating crews was going on, and we were wearied with the repetition of 'their new Clasper,' and 'Mr. Gulston,' and the 'easing' at Putney, it was announced that the youths were coached from a steam launch 'kindly lent' by a certain lord!

Apropos of the stage, it is characteristic that the two most successful adapters are Scottish gentlemen. They have taken Sir Pertinax's father's advice as to the 'siller.' Apropos, again, after three hearings, the music of Lecocq's 'Prés St. Gervais' seems poor, and trivial; I believe for the reason, that there was nothing in the story to inspire. Now, that of 'Madame Angot' had a broad, vulgar genuineness, racy of the markets, and, above all, that strange mixture of fantastic dandyism and revolution, which in itself seemed a story, and supplied local colour.

THE MAN IN THE MASK.





Drawn by R. Hennessey)

SWEETHEARTS.

LONDON SOCIETY.

JUNE, 1875.

ABOVE SUSPICION.

BY MRS. J. H. RIDDELL.

CHAPTER XXIII.

SLIGHTLY IN ADVANCE.

'SELINA,' said Mr. Wright next day, 'I have bad news for you.'

Mr. Wright imparted this intelligence at luncheon, whilst engaged in carving the dilapidated remains of a fowl which had done duty on the previous night. Mrs. Wright looked inquiringly at her husband over the cruet-stand, and Colonel Leschelles, knowing what was coming, fixed his eyes on the table-cloth.

'Yes, very bad news,' repeated the Rector, finding his better-half remained mute. 'Our dear friend is obliged to leave us to-morrow.'

'No, surely not!' exclaimed Mrs. Wright, with a start and an expression of decorous tenderness directed towards the veteran Colonel. 'I thought—that is, I hoped——'

'I know you are goodness itself,' remarked the Colonel, as she did not finish her sentence; 'and I would impose upon your kindness a little longer were it not absolutely necessary for me to leave Fisherton. When a man of my age,' added the Colonel bravely, 'finds any business to attend to, he is foolish not to do so at once.'

'Of your age indeed!' exclaimed Mr. Wright, with a jolly assurance, calculated to make an elderly gen-

tleman fancy his memory must have been playing him tricks.

'I think you grow younger every year, Colonel,' added Mrs. Wright mendaciously. 'I am sure you will never seem old, you have such a buoyant nature, and such boyish spirits.'

'You have a genius for saying pleasant things,' remarked the Colonel in answer to Mrs. Wright's implied compliment.

'Truthful things, I trust,' she answered, with a plaintive smile. 'It seems to me that truth should always walk first, and pleasantness follow after.'

'Admirable,' said the Reverend Dion, who never failed to applaud his wife's artistic utterances.

'But I cannot deceive myself any longer,' went on the Colonel, as though neither host nor hostess had interrupted his sentence. 'Like many another, I have gone on through life, forgetting time was running on too; and now, when I suddenly awaken, I find, what my friends have doubtless known for many a day, that notwithstanding my buoyant nature and boyish spirits, as you, Mrs. Wright, are good enough to call them, I am an old man—"terribly old," so Curran informed me this morning.'

'The naughty boy,' exclaimed Mrs. Wright; 'I will punish him for his rudeness.'

'I hope you will not punish the child for speaking the truth,' said Colonel Leschelles a little sarcastically. 'Moreover,' he added, watching Mrs. Wright furtively while he spoke, 'Miss Miles read Master Curran a very pretty lecture on politeness in general, and respect to his elders in particular.'

'Oh, indeed! I was not aware that Miss Miles considered herself competent to instruct any one.'

'Tush, my dear!' said Mr. Wright, who, though not above being affected by small matters himself, did honestly despise what he called the babbling and bubbling of women's trumpery jealousies. 'Bella Miles is as true a lady as I should ever desire to meet, though I grant you she may be a little ignorant of some of *les convenances*. She is a good girl too, kindly, unselfish, generous; and if she did scold the young rogue, I'll be bound he deserved every word of it.'

'Master Curran is young, and time will doubtless temper the present extreme frankness of his manners,' remarked Colonel Leschelles; 'but I cannot help saying that when out of the softening influence of his mother's society the child is somewhat apt to be uncivil.'

'I am very sorry,' answered Mrs. Wright, 'that any son of mine should ever appear rude to such a valued friend as you are.'

Whereupon the Colonel rejoined, 'Dear Mrs. Wright, do you imagine that truth could ever offend me? Few, indeed, have the art of presenting literal and unpleasant facts in a coating of sugar. Yourself and Mr. Wright have the happy knack of making deformity itself look beautiful; but then in

that, as in most other things, you are thorough artists.'

'I trust not—I hope not,' cried Mrs. Wright. 'We are sincere. Whatever our faults may be, we are utterly sincere, I can assure you.'

'There is no necessity for you to do so, dear,' interposed Mr. Wright. 'The Colonel knows all that.'

'Indeed,' said the Colonel, 'there is no one knows better than I how sincere Mrs. Wright is.'

In reply to which ambiguous speech Selina impulsively presented her thin ladylike hand to the Colonel, who pressed it, and bowed, and then returned it to the whilom Dublin beauty with all the decorous gallantry of a race now well-nigh extinct.

'Now, Leschelles,' said the Rector, who, after trying in vain to satisfy the cravings of a healthy appetite with the drumstick of a patriarchal cock, had fallen back upon bread, washed down by a few glasses of the Colonel's admirable sherry, 'I will only let you away on one condition, namely, that you come back for our confirmation. It will be a very pretty sight, and I should like you to meet the Bishop.'

'And our two girls are to be confirmed,' added Mrs. Wright.

'And Bella Miles,' supplemented the Rector. 'Now you must promise to come to us. You have never been at Fisherton yet in decent weather.'

'Fisherton in any weather,' Colonel Leschelles was beginning, when Mr. Wright cut across his speech.

'Come, come, that is no answer. Say we may count on your company. You will not regret honouring us with it. The confirmation will, I assure you, be a very pretty sight—very pretty indeed.'

The Rector had been at great pains to pronounce the word

pretty—usually a snare to his countrymen—correctly, and having eschewed the pitfalls represented by ‘pratty,’ and ‘prutty,’ into which Irish people generally tumble, he had finally arrived at the conclusion that there was only one correct way of uttering pretty, viz., to make the *e* the same as in pet.

Quite convinced he had at length conquered the difficulty, Mr. Wright aired the word on all possible occasions, and with an emphasis which of course drew attention to it.

‘My sister is going to present Maria with her dress for the occasion,’ went on the Rector, ‘and very pret-ty she will look in it, though, perhaps, I ought not to say so.’

‘She gives great promise of beauty,’ said the Colonel, who was considered, and who considered himself, a judge in such matters. ‘She grows very like her mother.’

‘Oh! Colonel,’ exclaimed Mrs. Wright, with a little modest bridling and graceful deprecation of the implied compliment that reminded Mr. Wright of the days when he could not eat, or drink, or sleep for thinking of her countless charms.

‘She is not so pretty yet,’ continued the Colonel calmly; ‘but I think she will be. She is certainly a nice-looking girl.’ Then, without allowing Mrs. Wright time for further protest, he proceeded to ask if the Bishop were a judge of wine.

‘I don’t think any man deserves to be a bishop who is not,’ said Mr. Wright jocosely.

‘Then in that case, if I bring myself, I should like to be allowed to bring the wine also,’ explained Colonel Leschelles.

‘Bring yourself—that is all we want,’ answered Mr. Wright.

‘I shall certainly do that,’ an-

swered the Colonel; ‘but I should like to hear the Bishop’s opinion of some port I had sent to me just as I was starting for Fisherton.’

‘Do as you like,’ agreed Mr. Wright; ‘we understand what you mean—don’t we, Selina? The Colonel would not object to see his old friend’s lot cast in even more pleasant pastures than Fisherton.’

‘I should like to see you a bishop,’ rejoined the Colonel, who certainly thought the sight of Mr. Wright as a ‘my lord,’ and Mrs. Wright as a ‘my lord’s lady,’ would have been cheap at fifty pounds a head.

‘You are indeed a friend in need to us,’ said Mrs. Wright, who had been exercising her mind, as had also the Rev. Dion his mind, on the subject of wine for the successor of the Galilean Fishermen.

In the privacy of the conjugal chamber they had decided to invite the Colonel to the episcopal feast, hoping he ‘might offer to send a little wine.’ It had been quite beyond their calculation that he would honour the feast himself, and provide all the wine.

‘We may as well make a luncheon party,’ suggested Mrs. Wright, when talking the matter over the same evening with her husband. ‘Luncheon need not cost us a great deal. People do not much care what they have to eat, so long as they have plenty of good wine.’

Which observation argued a considerable amount of worldly knowledge on the part of Mrs. Wright.

‘And his wine is A 1,’ said Mr. Wright, nothing loth to give honour where it was due.

‘Some of it is almost as old as himself,’ remarked Mrs. Wright, who could not forgive Colonel Leschelles’ strictures on Curran. ‘My dear Dion, how touchy the poor man is about his age.’

‘To a thoughtful man, even if

he be sufficiently religious, age is a very serious thing,' answered the Rev. Dion, who never had a finger ache without wondering how Selina and the little ones would get on if he were taken from them.

'He is certainly looking, to quote Curran, "terribly old." When I see his poor lean body buttoned up so tightly in that close-fitting top-coat, I feel as if some day when he unfastens it he will drop to pieces. How absurd he is still to affect all the airs of juvenility.'

Which remark of Mrs. Wright's was indeed quite true; but how hard a matter it is to grow old gracefully! After all, it is not easy to greet sorrow, or poverty, or reverses, or dishonour with a smiling face. And there are many people to whom age seems less endurable than grief, or shortness of money, or the cold looks of friends and acquaintances. For grief may be subdued, and in lieu of lost fortune another may be found; while if old friends have no cordial greetings, old acquaintances no longer wear bright faces, the wise man understands precisely how to value their former professions and kindnesses, and turns his attention to new people, who may be pleasanter and more faithful.

But for old age—ah! my friends, we must have grown very weary of the road, very tired of the inns by the way—very, very sure that all earthly good is vanity, before we can feel quite thankful and satisfied to know youth, sweet, bright youth is gone, and may return never more—that manhood's prime is past likewise—that the morning sun and the mid-day have shone their last for us, and that we shall never behold more any radiance save the solemn glory which prefaces—night.

Colonel Leschelles did not feel all this then, and Mrs. Wright

found fault with him for refusing to look at the clock.

She did not know he had a dream that the pleasantest part of life might still be in store for him. She had not the faintest idea that the while his thoughts should have been on wills, they were dwelling on wives.

If she had, having that beautiful maternal eye, of which we hear so much, directed to the interests of her children, it is scarcely likely she would have parted with the Colonel with all the touching interest she did.

'God bless you!' said the Rev. Dion, as his visitor stepped into the fly which was to convey him to Fisherton station.

'Good-bye, good-bye,' echoed Mrs. Wright from the steps, while the children, clustering about, shouted, 'Good-bye, Colonel!' and waved their mites of handkerchiefs, as did their mother her French cambric adorned with lace.

In truth, Mrs. Wright was delighted to see the last of their visitor. She had been on drill for so long a time, that she longed for the matutinal cup of tea in bed, the easy lounge before the drawing-room fire, the scrambling meals, the cosy *tête-à-tête* with Dion after the children were all in bed.

Not a strong woman naturally, and less strong in arithmetical proportion to every young Wright who, in the midst of harass and distress, had made his or her way into this wicked world, the strain of a martinet visitor in the house tried her more year by year.

'I have *never* been so tired of the Colonel before,' she said, breaking into an hysterical whimper in her husband's study after the visitor's departure.

'My dear, he is a prince,' answered Mr. Wright; and he handed her a cheque for five-and-twenty pounds.

Selina took it.

'To which of the children do you think he will leave his money, Dion?' she asked.

If you consider, my reader, women are proverbially ungrateful. I am afraid Mrs. Wright was.

'To none,' answered the Rev. Dion.

It so chances, my reader, that occasionally men are gifted with a wonderful foreknowledge.

Intuitively Mr. Wright felt the relations between himself and Colonel Leschelles had changed. He could not have given any reason for the faith which was in him, but he was sure.

He comprehended, vaguely perhaps, but still certainly, that the Colonel had passed beyond him, and would spend no more Christmas Days in his house.

He did not know the disturbing influence was Bella Miles; but as one vaguely feels the presence of thunder, he felt there was a fresh element at work. And, indeed, how should he know? There was Miss Bella, as kind, as ready, as inscrutable as ever. There was the Colonel absent.

How on earth was the Rector, whose thoughts never wandered very far afield, to comprehend the Colonel was going to Abbotsleigh to hunt up the Barthorne lineage?

In the course of the next three months the Colonel did not find all he had set out to discover, but he discovered enough to induce him to take a furnished house at Daceford, and write thence to his friends at Fisherton:—

'I am located here, by my doctor's orders, for a few months, and shall hope to run over to the Rectory and have the pleasure of seeing you and Mrs. Wright at my little cottage whenever you have a spare afternoon to waste upon an invalid.'

In reply Mr. Wright shook

hands on paper cordially with the gallant Colonel.

He was delighted to have him for so near a neighbour; but why did he not come and take up his abode at the Rectory—or if not at the Rectory, why not at Simpson's Retreat? Simpson's Retreat was the perfection of a country snuggery, and he might have had it for a pound a week.

However, both regrets and reproaches being in vain, Mr. Wright would take an early opportunity of calling on his friend.

Selina, he regretted to say, was ill—very ill. The doctors ordered her to the seaside; but how she was to get to the seaside Mr. Wright professed himself unable to imagine.

Things had, however, turned up miraculously for them (himself and Selina) so often that it seemed a mere doubting of Providence to doubt now.

To this very palpable hint the Colonel did not respond immediately.

'There is an obtuseness about the man I do not quite understand,' observed Mr. Wright to his better-half.

'My dear Dion, he is getting very old,' said the lady, with a little sob. She had set her heart on going to the seaside, and she was not well—far from it, indeed.

When Easter had passed, however, and Lent, as a matter of course, also (it may not be quite amiss to remark that every day during Lent Mr. Wright thanked Heaven there were no leanings to Popery about him), the Colonel began to think Mrs. Wright would really be better away from Fisherton, and, having arrived at this conclusion, he one day took Mr. Wright aside, and 'hoped he would not feel offended if he asked him whether pecuniary matters had any share in prevent-

ing Mrs. Wright having the change she so greatly needed.'

In answer Mr. Wright wrung Colonel Leschelles' hand, and saying, with effusion, 'he could have no secrets from such a friend,' told him precisely how they were situated, the result of which touching confidence being that twenty pounds changed hands, and Mrs. Wright and her very latest baby, accompanied by a servant and Rosie and Curran, started for the nearest seaport on an early day.

As a natural consequence, Mr. Wright was much at Daceford, and Colonel Leschelles very much indeed at Fisherton Rectory, where, the young ladies of the Wright family eschewing the task of entertaining their papa's friend, Miss Bella Miles was usually charged with the burden of receiving and amusing him.

Did she object to undertaking it? By no means. In those days of unrestricted intercourse she formed a very sincere liking for the officer—no longer young. Had she been a different sort of girl, she might even have gone the length of imagining she loved him.

And, in truth, she did love him, though not in the way he desired.

When, in the time to come, she summed up her opinion of him, it amounted to this:

'He is the truest gentleman I ever knew, and the staunchest friend woman could desire in her extremest need.'

And that was all? Yes, all there could ever be.

The girl beheld the years stretching between the man had forgotten; and never for one moment did it enter into her mind, that he could regard her save as grandchild or daughter, till he asked her to be his wife.

When—but I anticipate.

With Mrs. Wright at the seaside, and the household moralities uninfluenced by Selina's gentle presence, events occurred at the Rectory which never could have happened had she been at the helm.

When she returned and beheld the chaos her absence had wrought, she said plaintively, 'I must never leave you again, Dion.'

'No, my dear,' answered the Reverend Dion, 'you had better take the whole responsibility the next time. No matter how things turn out, be sure I will not blame you;' which was a slight rap over the knuckles administered by the Reverend Dion; for Mrs. Wright had blamed him most severely for his management of matters during her absence.

'If you had only given me a hint, I would have come back, even had the journey killed me,' she said.

'How could I give you a hint when I had not a suspicion myself?' he answered.

'She is a bad, designing girl,' said Mrs. Wright, 'and I always thought so,' at which juncture the Reverend Dion was judiciously silent.

CHAPTER XXIV.

'NOTHING COULD BE BETTER.'

FISHERTON was looking its best—its very best, indeed—though Mr. Wright, with that tendency to differ from other people, which was a way he had of asserting originality of opinion, declared Fisherton was only perfect in August, when every garden presented a blaze of colour—when the orchards were full of ripened fruit—when the creamy flowers of the magnolia showed themselves from amidst the green polished leaves—when the myrtle buds

were opening and the gum-cistus unfolding its beauties one hour and scattering them on the earth the next.

'At that season,' pronounced Mr. Wright, 'I first beheld Fisherton. At that season the place is perfect.'

And the Fisherton aborigines hearkened to the voice of this Solomon who had come to sit in judgment upon the beauties of their native village, and were well pleased with the Rector's dictum.

'Though I will still uphold,' said one ancient pensioner sturdily, 'that Fisherton be main pretty when the May is all a-bloom, and smelling so purely sweet, and the throstle a-singing his throat out, and the lads and the lassies wandering through the lanes shaded with green limes—sweethearting, as I used to do myself once; but that is an old story now.'

His love-making might be an old story, but the man's notion that Fisherton was 'main pretty' in May and the early summer chanced to be still quite true. No pooh-poohing of the Reverend Dion could rob the hawthorns of the white glory which covered them, or take the scent of the May from the clear air, or retard the opening of the dog-roses, or remove the buttercups out of the meadows, or the bright green, the pure, bright spring green off the foliage.

After the winter floods—after the snow and frost, and rain and hail—after grey skies and lowering fogs, Fisherton always came forth beautiful in the spring, as if newly created. Verdure everywhere—the fresh smell which comes with the rising sap, the songs of birds, the hum of bees. A sweet valley when the waters had subsided—when the Thames flowed quietly within due bounds on his way to the sea.

Yes then, before the summer droughts had parched the earth—before the reaper had cut the corn—while there was still bud, and promise of fruit, Fisherton, set around with May, and lilac, and laburnum, with chestnut-trees bursting into flower, with the red hawthorn and the redder japonica all ablaze in the cottagers' gardens, looked its beautiful best.

It was afternoon, and two young men, who had been fishing, sauntered idly up from the Thames, and turned their steps towards the village.

One was the son of a rich man, who had a few months previously bought Fisherton Lodge, the great place of that small neighbourhood; the other a baronet, whose acquaintance Mr. Morrison's heir had made at Oxford, where parvenus go to make friends.

The first young fellow was clever, and short-sighted; for perhaps both of which reasons he disfigured himself by constantly wearing a glass screwed up into his eye. The second was not clever in the ordinary sense of the word, and not short-sighted; but he had an advantage over his fellow—it was only needful to look at and to like him.

A man fleeing for his life, and coming unexpectedly upon the pair, would at once have said to himself, 'I can trust you,' meaning Sir Harry; 'I will not trust you,' meaning Bob Morrison; and yet there can be no doubt that Bob Morrison would have helped him loyally, had he seen his way to rendering assistance: only he would first have wanted to know so much, that any poor wretch in a difficulty might scarcely have relished his cross-examination.

With Sir Harry, on the contrary, he would have helped the man on the instant, and possibly never asked a question.

Foolish, no doubt; and yet, as we know, Providence takes care of drunken people and fools. Providence had taken remarkably good care of the young baronet.

So far, though he had been cheated more than once, and disappointed as regarded the antecedents of his *protégés* over and over again, Sir Harry's memory held no shameful secret, recalled no enormous iniquity.

Left very young fatherless, brought up by a mother who idolised him, adored by his pretty cousin Ethel, flattered by his private tutor, surrounded at Oxford by those who would gladly have let him walk over them had he expressed a desire to that effect, Sir Harry had fallen no prey to sharks or flatterers. When men talked about his faults and follies, no scandalous flutter of petticoats disturbed the air. He had not run into debt to such an extent as seriously to embarrass his estate. His transactions with those good Jews who kindly look after the pecuniary welfare of young Christians were confined to two little bill affairs, in both of which he had lent his name to a friend, and lost his money. He had made no great success at college, but neither had he made any great *fiasco*; and as time went on, there was only the same story to be repeated of his life.

His mother wanted him to go into Parliament, and marry his cousin; but Sir Harry did not seem inclined to pleasure her Ladyship as regarded either whim.

Nevertheless, with that pertinacity for which even the gentlest women are remarkable, Lady Medburn felt quite certain her dear Harry would yet add his wisdom to that of the rulers of the people, and make Ethel mistress of Cortingford, the name of the family seat, and his poor mother happy.

Ethel was the daughter of Lady Medburn's only sister. That sister had run away from her father's vicarage with a handsome young ensign, who speedily left her an almost penniless widow, with one little girl.

On her death-bed she bequeathed this child to Lady Medburn, and Miss Edith's life had consequently proved a most desirable affair ever since she wore short white frocks and long blue sashes.

Lady Medburn had no sons or daughters save her Harry, and there was no Miss Medburn to make a wearisome affair of existence to the young dependent, for which reason she, though utterly penniless, had grown up with all the assured certainty of position which might have become an heiress of the house.

Yes, it had long been decided at Cortingford that Ethel was to be the next Lady Medburn; and if there were those who said Sir Harry would never be more to her than cousin, the majority opined he would settle down some day, and marry Miss Selham, if only to please his mother.

At seven-and-twenty, however, the baronet seemed as far off settling at home and matrimony as ever; and it did not occur to Lady Medburn and Miss Selham, on that particular day when Fisherton was looking its best, that there was any especial need of their prayers to avert the calamity of marriage from so heart-whole a young man.

'What's all this?' exclaimed Mr. Morrison, as he and his friend, turning a corner, came in sight of the church. 'Carriages—servants—children, of course. Oh! the confirmation! I had forgotten it, though I saw three washing-baskets full of flowers, sent in honour of the occasion, yesterday. Let us stop, Medburn, and have a

look at the girls as they come out.'

They had not long to wait. Already the ceremony was over, and the little bustle of leaving commencing. Coachmen were bringing their horses up to the gate of the churchyard, footmen were flying from the porch to the road, and from the road back again to the porch. The feeble, aged women at the almshouses opposite were shading their eyes with one hand, and holding back obstreperous little urchins with the other. On the tiled roofs the pigeons plumed themselves, as if waiting for the congregation to admire their beauty. Glimpses were caught at intervals of the Rev. Dionysius bustling about on business connected with his Lordship the Bishop; and all this time people were defiling out of the church, singly, by twos and threes, forming groups amongst the grass-covered graves, or walking away solitary and silent, having no one to whom to speak. Even at a village gathering one may always see a few lonely and neglected inhabitants.

At last came the girls, the commonalty first, the *élite* last—a goodly company.

There was naughty Polly Prickley, the most audacious romp in Fisherton, looking as demure in her light cotton dress and plain cap, coquettishly worn, as if she had spent every hour since babyhood in reading tracts and reciting the Psalms. There was Victoria, daughter and heiress of Sir John and Lady Giles of Riversdale, tricked out like a bride, with everything on her a milliner could suggest and wealth and vanity secure, and an expression on her face which said plainly:

'Good people, look at me. Though I am so charmingly dressed and so handsome, and

though I am the only child of my papa, Sir John Giles, and though he is going to give me a splendid fortune, I have just renounced the World, the Flesh, and the Devil. You may be surprised to hear the news; but it is true. Ask the Bishop, if you are inclined to disbelieve me.'

'Gracious heavens!' exclaimed Mr. Robert Morrison, as he beheld this young lady ambling along to her papa's carriage, 'would any other woman except Lady Giles have sent her daughter out dressed for such an occasion like a May Queen? No, my dear, it is of no use your looking so graciously at me. I am engaged; and if I were not, I would never marry you, Miss Vic. Do regard that young person, Medburn, and contrast her with the lilies of the field, which she only resembles in so far as she neither toils nor spins.'

But his companion would not regard Miss Giles. His attention was fixed on three other young people who walked slowly and decorously out of the porch, the very last to leave the church.

'Morrison, who is that lovely girl?' asked Sir Harry. Hearing which question, Mr. Morrison adjusted his eye-glass, and surveyed the group.

'That—oh! that is our Rector's eldest daughter. Pretty, undeniably, and the dress becomes her. Maria Wright. The Rector has a baker's dozen. Mrs. Wright is at Southsea with the latest addition to the family. Now the show is over, shall we be going home?'

Their homeward way led them past the line of carriages, and Mr. Robert Morrison had to raise his hat frequently, and to pause often when some demonstrative lady beckoned him to her side.

From a distance, however, he was at length hailed by his father.

'Hallo! Robert,' shouted that

worthy, 'what are you doing here?'

'We have been following the occupation of the first disciples, and admiring the doings of their descendants,' was the reply.

'In other words,' added Sir Harry, who saw that Mr. Morrison looked puzzled, 'we have been fishing, and we have been admiring the young ladies of Fisherton.'

'Well, it was a pretty sight,' said Mr. Morrison, who had stayed away from a committee meeting in order to support Mr. Wright on the occasion, and meet the Bishop afterwards.

'I saw one very pretty sight,' agreed the baronet.

'He means Maria Wright,' explained Mr. Robert compassionately.

'Now, do not be ill-natured, Robert,' entreated his parent; 'the girl is pretty, very much so indeed. Looks quite like a what do you call it, in all that light drapery.'

'I suppose you mean a seraph, sir,' suggested his son.

'She is not in the least like a seraph,' said Sir Harry, as if there were something especially derogatory in the comparison.

'My dear fellow, she shall be like anything you please,' Mr. Robert Morrison was saying, when a movement on the part of Mr. Morrison's footmen indicated some arrival of importance, and Mr. Wright, walking forward, began:

'Allow me, my Lord, to have the honour of introducing my very good friend and most liberal parishioner, Mr. Morrison. I am proud to have so public-spirited and generous a gentleman located in this parish. In whatsoever place he may have chosen to cast his lot, he has always proved himself a staunch pillar of the Church.'

The Bishop, who, being a most quiet and unpretending individual,

looked, but for his dress, much less like a bishop than Mr. Wright, expressed himself truly delighted to make Mr. Morrison's acquaintance, and shook hands, with much impressiveness, on the side path, to which Mr. Morrison had promptly descended.

Then his Lordship stepped, with an air of dignified accustomedness, which was not at all assumed, into the carriage, and Mr. Wright, at Mr. Morrison's solicitation, was about to follow, when his eye fell on the two young men, who had fallen a little back when the Bishop appeared on the scene.

If Mr. Wright had met Calcraft in his Sunday clothes wandering about Fisherton parish he would have raised the rectorial hat in greeting. The practice had often served him in good stead, and he was not going to deviate from it now; so he greeted Mr. Robert Morrison and Sir Harry Medburn with affable condescension, and they, as in duty bound, returned his salute.

'My son, Mr. Wright,' said Mr. Morrison, senior; 'lately returned from Egypt; and Sir Harry Medburn,' added the millionaire.

Whereupon the Rector seemed to expand, physically and morally. He could not tell Mr. Robert Morrison how charmed he was to see him at Fisherton. He could not express to Sir Harry Medburn how delighted he was to make his acquaintance.

He trusted they would both come on to the Rectory and partake of luncheon. Only a few friends to meet his Lordship. No ceremony, just a glass of wine, a slice of meat, and a biscuit. With Mrs. Wright absent he could offer little, but that little he hoped the young men would honour with their presence. Nothing loth, the young men availed themselves of the invitation.

'Send the carriage back, please sir,' said Mr. Robert Morrison to his father; and then the carriage referred to, containing the Bishop, Mr. Wright, and Mr. Morrison, senior, drove off, the Rector returning the salutations of his parishioners in a 'king by the grace of God and defender of the faith' manner.

The meagre glass of wine, the modest slice of beef, the vague biscuit of which Mr. Wright had made mention, proved to be simply figurative expressions, really representing a feast that need have shamed the table of no modern Belshazzar.

On the board appeared everything in season, and many things out of it. Each guest, with the exception of the Bishop, had contributed something to the feast, which thus came really to assume a little of the character of a picnic. Spring chickens, as large as young turkeys, came from the yards of Sir John Giles, whose 'lady' had made poultry a study, and sold sittings of eggs at fabulous prices. Fruit and flowers were contributed by Mr. Morrison; the Rector's churchwarden, who had never before found himself in such grand and good company, had sent in enough butter, and cheese, and bacon from his little farm, as he modestly called eight hundred acres, as would, Bella Miles and Nurse Mary calculated, last the family for three weeks. As to the other churchwarden, who said he was a plain man, and did not want to intrude on the Bishop or anybody else, he dispatched from his warehouse in town, which warehouse happened, 'providentially' Mr. Wright said, to be the description called Italian, such a supply of foreign delicacies that the Rector's heart softened towards the sometime recalcitrant parish representative, and blessed him

for all the dainties he should now be able to take to the seaside, snugly packed, when he next ran down to see poor Selina.

Never, out of a great man's house, had the Bishop beheld such preparations in his honour, and as it was part and parcel of Mr. Wright's nature and politics to give unbounded honour where honour was due, his Lordship soon understood that the entertainment was rather secular than clerical; that the luncheon was but a series of gifts laid at his own admirable feet, and his soul inclined to the man able, at this time of the world, to draw such admirable offerings from the cellars, and forcing-houses, and dairies, and warehouses of his friends, in order to do honour to his ecclesiastical chief.

Especially in the matter of that port. The Colonel had struck by accident his Lordship's weakness.

He was no *gourmand*, or *gourmet*. Like most wise people, he liked good things when they fell in his way; but he was moderate in, and not over particular concerning, his fare, as became a bishop.

'But if he must drink wine,' this was what he said himself, 'if people would insist on offering him something out of a decanter, instead of a tumbler of honest Bass—a beverage good enough for an emperor—he did not care to swallow a decoction of blackberries.'

And no doubt the poor man had often been forced to taste the products of some even less natural vintage, for which reason his Lordship appreciated the outcome of Colonel Leschelles' cellar, and was gracious to him accordingly.

Now, this pleased Mr. Wright. The Colonel was, *par excellence*, his friend, and not his parishioner. The Colonel held a different position from that occupied by any one

else round and about the table. Further, the Colonel and Sir Harry Medburn had at once discovered they knew each other intimately; knew far more about each other, in fact, Mr. Wright could see plainly, than the baronet knew of Mr. Robert Morrison.

'Really exceedingly gratifying,' thought the poor Rector, mentally planning his evening letter to Selina. 'Gratifying in the extreme.'

But gratifying as the luncheon proved, the tea-party on the lawn, to which several ladies, anxious to say they had met the Bishop, were bidden, proved more gratifying still. His Lordship praised the grounds, and their state of excellent cultivation.

'Well, it is no praise to me, my Lord,' said Mr. Wright, 'and very little expense either. As curate, I naturally moved about a good deal, and in each place where we settled my dear wife found some sickly gardener, or weakly labourer, or pensioner past regular work, whom she was able to help—for it is marvellous how little does help the poor—and now they come to us, first one and then the other; and when they do, they take off their coats and begin to put things in order. And they send us, those who are in situations, roots and plants, the things coming with their masters' compliments, and it is wonderful, it is really,' finished Mr. Wright, 'how our garden has grown and been kept.'

The Bishop thought the state of the garden spoke highly for all parties concerned; which was very natural, seeing his Lordship had not provided the beef and mutton, and arrowroot, and tea and so forth, these poor creatures needed, and been forced to wait months and years for his money, like some of the tradesmen Mr. Wright benefited by his patronage.

And then, when the Bishop praised the coffee, Mr. Wright said it was a present from his good kind friend, the parish warden, and made by one of his girls; but he did not mention that the girl's name was Bella Miles.

Indeed, during the whole of that evening Bella passed muster as one of the family.

Even Robert Morrison, who, having seen Maria talking to his mother concerning the clothes-baskets of flowers, knew only her amongst the Rector's daughters, remained under the same delusion, until, happening to remark how little Miss Bella resembled her sister, Lady Giles informed him the girl was not even a relation of the Wrights, but some orphan, whose friends paid Mr. Wright only a hundred a year for the inestimable advantage of living at the Rectory.

This with a sneer; for Lady Giles, who was no match for Mrs. Wright either in cleverness or repartee, disliked that lady, as is the pleasing manner of her pleasing sex, for no reason in particular.

She and Sir John had met the Morrisons abroad—had, indeed, first directed their attention to Fisherton Lodge as a desirable place to purchase—therefore she and Mr. Robert stood on the basis of old acquaintances; and her Ladyship hoped Robert—familiarily called Bob—might marry her daughter Victoria, occupied at the present moment in scolding her maid for malpractices in the matter of folding up dresses.

For Miss Victoria's name had by some mischance been left out of the list of invited guests—greatly, to say the truth, at the instigation of Miss Maria Wright; and as it would have seemed a special insult to Lady Giles to invite other unmarried ladies and exclude her daughter, no un-

married ladies were present—always excepting the Rector's family (including Bella Miles)—save those who, by reason of there remaining no matrimonial prospect whatsoever, were as good as married, or, by reason of lack of daughters, better.

Miss Miles did all that lay in her power to make the afternoon pass pleasantly. The Bishop complimented Mr. Wright on his charming family; and Mr. Wright bowed his delighted acknowledgments, and said, 'My Lord, though I say it, who perhaps should not, throughout England there is no more united family than mine.'

'And your eldest daughter seems a treasure in herself,' remarked his Lordship, referring to Bella.

'She is the image of her mother when I first saw her,' said Mr. Wright, referring to Maria.

'How remarkably unlike,' thought the Bishop, 'are the rest of the children to the mother.'

After that a wonderful thing happened. The Bishop, while talking to Bella Miles, forgot that his train left at a certain hour, so actually supposed he must wait until the next.

To fill up the interval, some one suggested 'music'; and Mrs. Wright being absent, and Mr. Wright knowing perfectly no one present but Miss Miles could satisfy the ears of a bishop, asked her to play.

And Bella did play. With all the power God had given her—with all the veins of her heart—she brought harmony out of the misused piano that night, and told to more than one of her auditors something of the force and passion in her nature.

'It is marvellous!' said the Bishop: 'it is indeed. I could not have believed so young a girl ca-

pable of playing as she does. I congratulate you. It is long since I have spent so profitable and pleasant a day—a day, I may truly say, of unmixed satisfaction. I am so much obliged!—thank you most earnestly.'

And, with the last conventional sentence on his lips, exit the Bishop in Mr. Morrison's carriage, Mr. Morrison seeing him to the station.

'What a wonderful girl that eldest daughter of our friend seems to be,' said the Bishop, speaking on the subject just then nearest to his mind.

'She is extremely pretty,' agreed the millionaire, who shared the tastes of his son, and who considered Maria Wright a much 'sweeter-looking creature' than Miss Miles.

'And what an admirable musician!' observed the Bishop.

'I am told all the Rector's children are clever in that respect; but I am no judge of music myself.'

'Your friend the baronet is a little attracted in that quarter, or I am much deceived,' said his Lordship, a little slyly.

'Yes; my son made some remark to a similar effect,' answered Mr. Morrison, still playing at cross purposes; and the next time he met Mr. Wright, he asked him some absurd question about Sir Harry, and told him even the Bishop had noticed how deeply the young man was smitten by Miss Maria's pretty face.

Out of pure mischief Mr. Robert Morrison had, after the Bishop left, managed to draw Mr. Wright apart in order to enlarge on the same theme; and accordingly, between champagne—a good deal of that wine being drunk at a late and very cosy supper, at which only Colonel Leschelles, the Rector, Mr. Robert Morrison, and his

friend were present—the remembered affability of the Bishop, the success of the day's proceedings, and visions of rank and wealth for Maria, Mr. Wright went to bed jubilant.

Not, however, before he had written to his better-half. The Reverend Dionysius never neglected her. If he had remembered few other promises in life, the vows made at a certain little country church in Wicklow were religiously kept by plausible, well-intentioned, selfish, careless Mr. Wright.

He had never been selfish towards Selina; she and the children were always considered first, and himself last; and if sometimes he did, as he could not help doing, enjoy a day thoroughly in her absence, there always succeeded to his pleasure a sense of wrong, as if his happiness had been purchased at the cost of a certain disloyalty to her.

For this reason, ere he slept, Mr. Wright penned the following letter to his absent wife:—

'DEAREST S.' (it was thus Mr. Wright, in the sacred familiarity of matrimonial correspondence, usually addressed his Selina)—'Late as it is—*One A.M.*—I must write you a line to say everything went off splendidly. The confirmation—the luncheon—all a *complete success*. His Lordship was more than gracious. He was condescendingly familiar; indeed, many a rector *we* have known has been far less affable. The girls looked lovely—simply lovely; Maria in especial, saint-like and angelic, reminding me of *you know who*, on the day which made me the happiest man in the three kingdoms.

'Her dress suited the dear child to perfection, and the solemnity of the service imparted a look of sweet thoughtfulness to her face,

which endued it with a *finishing charm*. I am not alone in this opinion. Parental vanity has not led me astray on this point. The dear girl was universally admired. Good, kind, charming Bella looked quite plain by comparison.

'The simple, modest attire which set off the retiring beauty of the one failed to suit the very different style of our child by adoption, who proved herself to-day all you could wish.

'And now, my dear, I come to the pith of my story. Our Maria has made a conquest. Of course it is not for any poor fallible human being to tell how this may all turn out; but a certain Sir Harry Medburn, staying with the Morrisons, has—so young Morrison assures me—quite lost his heart to our pretty one. He seems a very nice fellow, and, I find from Dod, is the patron of two livings!!!

'According to Morrison, he has thirteen thousand a year; and Leschelles, who knows him well, says he will be heir to a Sir Alexander Kelvin, who made heaps of money out in India, and who has no other near relative. You will not, dearest S., take all this for more than it is worth; but I do think our sweet child stands a very fair chance of being called to become my Lady—God bless her! Leschelles has invited Medburn to stay with him when he leaves the Morrisons. I have said nothing to Leschelles about Maria. *He is odd* in his notions, as you have often remarked; and I think least said in such a case is soonest mended.

'Inclosed is half of a five-pound note. It is my last, and I do not know where any more is to come from at present; but the hour before dawn is the darkest, and I trust our dawn is near at hand.

'I wrote to Mr. Irwin, asking him for fifty pounds—just another poor fifty—*nothing* to him, health

to you, and ease of mind to me; and what do you suppose he did?—sent me a *statement of account*, bringing me in one hundred and sixty-five pounds overdrawn—as if, even supposing he never received that amount, it could repay us for our loving care of that poor child, who is so grateful for our kindness. He explained that business was dull, and money scarce, &c. &c.—the *usual trade cry*, with which time has made us so well acquainted; and he said he must really beg me to excuse him from making any further advances at present. After all, my dear, as you say—I beg your pardon, you do not say anything so vulgar—but you imply there is “a dirty drop” somewhere in Mr. Irwin, and that *will show itself*. The longer I live, the more fully satisfied I feel that *blood* cannot associate for any length of time with *bone*. If you could only see the difference there is between young Morrison and his friend Sir Harry! But, of course, you will see, and, as usual, draw your own admirable conclusions.

‘Don’t buy anything this week till you see the hamper unpacked which I shall take down the day after to-morrow.

‘Every one contributed to to-day’s feast. We have had in our lives, spite of much anxiety, my dear S., great cause for thankfulness; but could you have seen the success of to-day, you must

have called it a *complete victory*. Nothing could have been better. I do not believe his Lordship ever sat to a better luncheon, better served, in his life.

‘Good night—or, rather, good morning, darling. Kiss the young master for me. What do you think of Leschelles and Medburn for godfathers, with Bella Miles for godmother? The conjunction might please even W.C.I., and be beneficial to the rogue hereafter.

‘Ever yours devotedly,

‘DION.’

Having addressed, and sealed up, and stamped which epistle, hers devotedly Dion put on his hat, and, whistling softly to himself, walked up to the little village shop that served as post-office, in order to drop his love-letter in the box.

It was a beautiful night, tender and mild, with refreshing perfumes pervading the air, the sky laden with a suspicion of light from the coming day.

The Rector extended his walk, and strolled on past Fisherton Lodge, and on to Riversdale, thence home.

‘Our dear Maria,’ he thought, ‘shall be mistress over a finer establishment than either of these. And there have been people who thought they could crush me. Ah! they did not quite understand the Rev. Mr. Wright!’

(To be continued.)



THOMAS LOVE PEACOCK.

A COMMONPLACE of conversation, which is only too sadly true, is for ever reminding us that the activity and energy of this age, with its quenchless thirst for physical and mental movement, has swept off the face of the earth a certain very interesting type of the human individual. All English generations before our own have had time to produce a race of men who, without much creative power, have possessed a passion for learning, a craving for reflective intellectual exercise, a faculty for the successful cultivation of *belles-lettres*, which, indeed, have added little to the stores of our literature except some verses, some scholia, or some reflections, but which have done inestimable service in making broad and solid the culture of the educated minority. A quiet practical life, without strain and without the possibility of poverty, has enabled them to cultivate what was called a hundred years ago 'an elegant retirement.' Now the fever of business and the widening of all intellectual interests, the fight for life and the claims of society, conspire to reduce to a minimum the numbers of those who are able and willing to devote themselves to the study of letters for its own sake. The 'people of quality' who did so much in a quiet way for poetry, classical learning, archaeology, and music in the eighteenth century are either tempted into the wasting circle of the politics of the hour, or if they give themselves to intellectual exercise at all, it is rather in the channel of experimental science. The gentlemen who met seventy years ago to quote Pindar over their wine, or to discuss Lord Byron's poems over a cup of green tea with my

lady, now flock, with geological specimens in their pockets, to the meetings of the British Association, or argue about the acoustic transparency of the atmosphere with scientific ladies from Girton. It would be idle to discuss the advantage or disadvantage of the new state of things. The times change, and we change with them. No doubt the port-wine was heady, the classic quotations monotonous, the criticism dreary and stupid, in the old-world days of elegant retirement. Possibly the present fashion for the anatomy of phenomena may one day seem to have been a scraping among dry bones. The fact is indisputable that the race of gentlemen who combined ease and the *belles-lettres* with an affectionate study of the classics has completely passed away. And Thomas Love Peacock was the last and by no means the least worthy of them.

Many of the characteristics of a 'last man' clung about Mr. Peacock. He was suspicious, resentful and dolorous in his aspect towards the world in general, hopeless for the future, regretful of the past, using satire as punishment, not as correction, and saved only by his affectionate and generous inner nature from the moroseness of disappointment and despair. Born in a generation full of the ferment of new hopes and aims, stirring with fresh intellectual stimulus towards all kinds of literary revival, a generation, too, remarkable for its ardent friendships and partizanships, Peacock remained, like Rogers, quite aloof, and, in this most unlike Rogers, without personal communion with the men of his time. Shelley is almost the only literary friend his granddaughter mentions in her recently-

published biography of him, and his antagonism to all the other poets is ludicrously patent in his writings. It was not that he was envious of their success; his nature was altogether too noble for so base an emotion as envy to take root in it; but he conscientiously disapproved of their innovations, and would have been content to find all modern literature destroyed, and the latest attainable verse to be the tragedies of Seneca. There was something beautifully impartial in his disdain for his contemporaries; the Lake School, the Cockney School, the Satanic School, all alike to him were heretics of the deepest dye. Walter Scott the Enchanter of the North? Mr. Peacock averred that the man who arranged the pantomimes at Drury Lane was a much greater enchanter! Southey was a god 'of the garden of the golden apples of corruption,' and the deity was rudely and most inaptly named! Coleridge is the 'self-elected laureate of the asinine king,' and all the poets of the day, even Byron, fall under the lash of this unlimited invective. Of course, with such singular and unconciliatory tastes, Peacock's own books were not likely to have much success.

'Quis leget hæc? Nemo, hercule, nemo;
Vel duo, vel nemo!'

might appropriately have been asked and answered in sight of such books as these; and yet, as what is intrinsically good will never wholly lack readers, in spite of all their author did to make them unpopular, 'Headlong Hall,' 'Crotchet Castle,' and the rest of Peacock's novels have never been without admirers, and now seem destined to enjoy a fresh lease of immortality.

Shelley, who appreciated and understood Peacock more than

most men then living, wrote of him in his letter to Maria Gisborne:—

'His fine wit
Makes such a wound, the knife is lost in it;
A strain too learned for a shallow age,
Too wise for selfish bigots; let his page
Which charms the chosen spirits of his time,
Fold itself up for a serener clime
Of years to come, and find its recompense
In that just expectation.'

This was written in 1820, and after fifty-five years the prophecy has been fulfilled, the recompense has come at last. The seven novels of Mr. Peacock, his poems, and all the most important of his fugitive writings have been collected into three stout volumes, which Mr. Cole edits, Lord Houghton introduces, and the poet's granddaughter prefaces with a clear and sensible biography. It is therefore to be hoped that the serener clime of which Shelley sang has been reached at last, since in the general frenzy for reproduction, when much far less worthy of revival is restored, this learned and witty writer also is preserved from oblivion.

Thomas Love Peacock was born at Weymouth on the 18th of October, 1785; his father was a London merchant, his mother, as we are quaintly informed, the only daughter of a naval officer who lost one of his legs in an action at sea. These two types were both manifest in his future character. He never lost the middle-class habits of the staid, practical man of business, and all his life he managed to combine with his office hours and with the classics a seemingly inconsistent interest in everything that had to do with shipping. In fact, at one epoch of his life the occult influence of the hero who lost one of his legs at sea was so strong upon him as to shut out almost all other interests;

for when he succeeded James Mill in the service of the East India Company, he was the first to suggest and to prove the practicability of making long voyages by steam, and it was in consequence of important evidence given by him before the House of Commons that iron men-of-war of a new class and light draught were constructed and used. As these matters occupied the whole of his time and attention from 1831, when, as he proved by the publication of 'Crotchet Castle,' he was at the very zenith of his power as a writer, they are not to be passed over in silence. There can be no doubt that, had the period of his comparative idleness lasted ten years longer, he would have been able to produce works of far higher finish than any he has left behind him. But it was not in any such dubiously ancestral manner only that his mother influenced his development of character. She is said to have been a woman of unusual gifts, and the tenderest loving sympathy existed between them, broken only by her death. She lived, with undiminished powers of mind, until 1833; Peacock had, from the first lisplings of his boyish years, been accustomed to discuss everything with her, and lay before her everything he wrote. We do not learn that his amiable wife had any special proclivity to literature, and it seems certain that after his marriage his mother retained her affectionate censorship over his writings. Her death depressed him exceedingly, and, as we have already said, he wrote nothing more for nearly thirty years. The pressure of business and the lack of home sympathy may have united to make authorship too irksome to be continued.

As a child he was peculiarly and strikingly beautiful, with masses of flaxen curls that hung below

his waist, and with bright, intelligent eyes. Poor stupid old Queen Charlotte, consumed with her habitual ennui, was driving along in her chariot one day, when this bright and sunny child flashed across her. The carriage had to stop, Master Tom Peacock was called to the side, and a royal kiss was imprinted between the yellow curls. His schoolmaster predicted that he would be one of the most remarkable men of his day. The same brilliant appearance that fascinated the queen and the dominie into such unwonted graciousness remained with him through life. The pretty boy grew up into a very handsome man, and there was something especially noble about him in extreme old age, the massive and powerful features being set off by masses of wavy white hair. When he was thirteen, he met with these words in some book: 'To be competently skilled in ancient learning is by no means a work of such insuperable pains.' The desire for classic study had begun to spring up in him already; this dictum determined him in his resolution. The wise and sympathetic mother (his father died when he was three years old) was pleaded with, and the unusual step was taken of immediately leaving school to begin a course of careful self-tuition. Strange to say, the experiment succeeded; the young boy began to read the best books of antique literature with no other help than could be obtained from the best German critics, and the marginalia of Heyne and Hermann took the place of schoolmaster and tutor. Three years later, Peacock being sixteen years old, a fresh experiment was made; he induced his mother to give up their house at Chertsey and come up to Bloomsbury to live, where, in daily attendance at the British Museum, he went through those rarer

classics unattainable elsewhere, and illustrated the whole by studying the statues, bas-reliefs, gems, and whatever other relics of ancient civilisation he could find there. It is no wonder that, with such an aptitude for work and with such golden opportunities, he soon became one of the most accomplished scholars of his day.

'Back to his studies, fresher than at first,
Fierce as a dragon,
He, soul-hydroptic with a sacred thirst,
Sucked at the flagon,'

until he became so saturated with the antique ichor that he could hardly speak, write, or think without reference to ancient thought, writing, or speech. He gaily answered a doctrine of chemical science by quoting an epigram of Rhianus; if the talk was of ghosts, he had a story from Petronius Arbiter; a hypochondriac friend was comforted with a precious scripture out of Lucretius. And yet, with all this, he was not by any means a cold or bloodless pedant. His use of learning was much the same as Ben Jonson's, with whom, indeed, he had much intellectual relationship. The profusion of learned details gives colour and richness to 'Volpone' and to 'Crotchet Castle'; it is only in the feebler works of these writers that one becomes weary of the perpetual dropping of Latinity. And if it be objected that to quote Latin and Greek in novels is not a usual or approved practice, it may be answered that Peacock's novels are exceedingly unusual and unconventional in form and structure. If they were not so, they would not have survived, for their greatest merit consists in their strangeness. His familiarity with the antique enabled Mr. Peacock with ease to throw his thoughts into a form of words that was

exquisitely fastidious and delicate, and one great pleasure attainable from his writings is the constant contrast between the violence of the idea and the polished suavity of its expression.

In 1804 he published his first work, a thin pamphlet of humorous verse called 'The Monks of St. Mark.' In 1806 a more important volume followed, 'Palmyra, and other Poems,' 'Palmyra' being a rather good ode in the manner of Collins. And it was just at this time that a romantic phase of his experience began. In 1807 the family returned to their old home in Chertsey; Peacock was twenty-two, and his studies, at all events the more arduous part of them, fairly over. He fell in love with a beautiful girl of eighteen, and they met daily, through the summer months of 1807, in the romantic ruins of Newark Abbey. This attachment was very deep and sincere on Peacock's side, but owing to the malicious misrepresentations of a third person, the engagement was broken off. The young lady, believing herself deserted, married another man. Peacock never recovered from this disappointment; in later life his favourite haunt was Newark Abbey, and a few days before his death, he called his granddaughter to his side, and whispered to her that he had been 'dreaming of dear Fanny,' telling her that the dream comforted him, and that it often repeated itself. The memory of the first love was fresh after sixty years. He drew a portrait of this lady in 'Crotchet Castle' as Miss Touchandgo, who, curiously enough, is described as living, not in the valley of the Thames, but in that very district of Caernarvonshire from which the author took his eventual wife. His best serious verses seem to be inspired by the memory of Fanny, and when, nearly at the end of his

life, he wrote the beautiful stanzas in 'Gryll Grange' beginning:

'I played with you 'mid cowslips blowing,
When I was six and you were four;
When garlands weaving, flower-balls
throwing,
Were pleasures soon to please no
more.
Through groves and meads, o'er grass
and heather,
With little playmates, to and fro,
We wandered hand in hand together;
But that was sixty years ago.'

he seemed still to reflect with sadness on this early disappointment.

In 1808 Mr. Peacock, for the first and only time in his life, took part in active service. He was appointed under-secretary to Sir Home Popham, and to Flushing on board H.M.S. 'Venerable.' It was detestable to him to be so engaged; with his usual vehemence he declared that his mind was being degraded and his morals contaminated.

'As to writing poetry, or doing anything else that is rational, in this floating Inferno, it is almost next to a moral impossibility. I would give the world now to be at home.'

His wish was very soon granted him, for in 1809 he left the 'Venerable,' where, in spite of all his sorrows, he seems to have written a good deal of verse. From this time until his entering the service of the East India Company in 1819, he spent ten years in happy pastoral wanderings through North Wales and the Valley of the Thames, the two districts of English scenery which fascinated him most, and both of which he explored with the utmost affection and patience. At Oxford, in 1809, he finished a long poem, the 'Genius of the Thames,' which had some success, and immediately after its publication he took his first ramble in North Wales. How thoroughly he was familiar with the scenery of Merionethshire and Caernarvon-

shire his novels amply testify. The whole scene of 'Headlong Hall' is laid in the latter county; 'Melincourt' is supposed to be enacted in Westmoreland, but the landscape is the same. 'The Misfortunes of Elphin' is wholly taken up with Welsh history and legend; in 'Crotchet Castle' the whole party of *dramatis personæ* make the very voyage Peacock so dearly loved to make, from Chertsey, by Oxford, through the canal that connects the Thames with the Severn, into the Ellesmere Canal, mooring at last by the aqueduct of Pontycysyllty in the Vale of Llangollen. The remainder of the plot is carried out in the Snowdon region. In fact, the critics who love to classify everybody into this or that school, might put Peacock all by himself into the Welsh School of poetry. The romantic beauty of the mountains enchanted him, and he spent some winter months of 1810 most rapturously in the heart of Merionethshire, 'sometimes skipping about, singing, and playing all sorts of ridiculous antics, at others doling out staves of sorrow, and meditating on daggers and laurel-water.' Here he became acquainted with Dr. Gryffyd, whose daughter Jane pleased Peacock 'by talking of Scipio and Hannibal, and the Emperor Otho.' This judicious display of classical tastes led to the happiest results, for the lady eventually became his wife, 'the white Snowdonian antelope and mountain Fair' of Shelley's poem ten years later.

Peacock saw Shelley for the first time in 1812, just before the latter went to Tanyrallt. An intimate friendship sprang up between them, and amongst all Shelley's wayward wanderings the correspondence between the friends was never broken off. There could have been little spiritual com-

munion between the two, but there was much in Peacock's nature with which Shelley would feel a superficial sympathy, and the serene good sense and even temper of the older of the two seem to have soothed the wayward and self-torturing spirit of the younger. They had no perceptible influence on one another in style or manner of literary labour; and I confess myself at a loss to understand Lord Houghton when he attributes Shelley's rapid progress in poetry to his association with Peacock. As a matter of fact, during his lifetime Peacock seems to have taken very little notice of Shelley's poetry. The two friends discussed the classics together and played together at floating paper-boats; Peacock listened with sarcastic silence to Shelley's rhapsodical schemes for the renovation of mankind, but beyond suggesting a title for one poem, 'Alastor,' and sitting by the poet's side during the composition of another, 'The Revolt of Islam,' he seems to have had no influence on or interest in Shelley's imaginative work. It is especially noticeable that the hero of 'Nightmare Abbey,' who is avowedly Shelley, is not given to writing verses at all, but occupied with transcendental philosophy and with schemes for the improvement of the human race. At all events, the personal attachment between them was totally independent of any assumed literary benefit, of any mutual position of pupil and teacher. In 1815 Peacock went to live at Great Marlow, Shelley being then settled a mile away among the glorious Bishan woods. No scenery is more characteristically English than this. The exquisite river, winding majestically between meadows and copests, forms the invariable centre of the landscape, now overhung by steep woods, now touching the

feet of some quaint little town, that sits, as Balzac says of Tours, with its feet in the water, splashing the river with the tips of its fingers; now the trees open to give a wide view over the hedgerows to a bowery village, and its ivied steeple; now they close again into a gloom mysterious and sombre even in the heart of summer. But it is the river that gives character to it all: in winter rains there are strange slate-coloured harmonies on the face of the stream; in spring it is dappled with sunshine and shadows; in summer the sparkling lines of the eddies are incessantly cool and refreshing to the eye; in autumn the richest tones of amber and russet are reflected upon it from sky and woods. It is never the same for many moments; it contains the very essence of mutability, with none of the painful elements of decay. The Thames has affected the character of English literature more than we readily allow. From the 'Confessio Amantio' downwards, the English poets have been lovers and disciples of the river, and both Shelley and Peacock fell under its witchery.

With 1815 began a period of great literary activity for both these men. In company with Shelley's biographer, Mr. Hogg, they took long expeditions on foot or by boat, and filled up the spare hours with incessant authorship. The first result on Peacock's part was the appearance of his first novel, 'Headlong Hall,' in 1816. It excited attention at once, was much praised and widely read, and ran through three editions. The plan of the book was precisely that which he adhered to throughout his novels, and therefore, although 'Headlong Hall' is far from being his masterpiece, we may describe it somewhat minutely as a specimen of Peacock's manner. The

scene is laid 'at the seat of the ancient and honourable family of the Headlongs, of the Vale of Llanberis, in Caernarvonshire.' The present head of this dignified house, Harry Headlong, Esq., entertains a large number of guests at his house, each of whom represents a particular eccentricity, or peculiarity of mind. The four principal persons are, 'Mr. Foster, the perfectibilian; Mr. Escot, the deteriorationist; Mr. Jenkison, the statu-quo-ite; and the Rev. Dr. Gaster, who, though of course neither a philosopher nor a man of taste, had so won upon the Squire's fancy by a learned dissertation on the art of stuffing a turkey, that he concluded no Christmas party would be complete without him.' These *illuminati*, of course, converse, and their whims and oddities make up the whole body of the novel. There is scarcely any effort at weaving a plot; there are but few, and those very mechanical, adventures; and there is no attempt made to develop character. In fact, the charge brought against Dickens, that he described the eccentric accessories of an individuality, but did not touch the individuality itself, is wholly true of Peacock. As I said before, his manner is exceedingly like that of Ben Jonson, and his characters are essentially the 'humours' of the time. The people meet round the breakfast or dinner-table, and hold Socratic dialogues about philosophy, and the Scotch, and scholia on Aristophanes, and the way to cook woodcocks, and then philosophy again; the whole evolved in a series of keen, bright sentences, full of humour, extravagance, elegant learning, and monstrous paradox. No subject is harped upon long enough to become tiresome, and the dialogues are interspersed with sentimental or bacchanalian songs, and relieved by little adventures or

the advent of new guests. The chapters are generally wound up with a quarrel, in this way:—

"I admit," said Mr. Foster, "there are many things may, and therefore will, be changed for the better."

"Not on the present system," said Mr. Escot, "in which every change is for the worse."

"In matters of taste I am sure it is," said Mr. Gall, "there is in fact no such thing as good taste left in the world."

"Oh Mr. Gall!" said Miss Philomela Poppyseed, "I thought my novel—"

"My paintings," said Sir Patrick O'Prism—

"My ode," said Mr. MacLaurel—

"My ballad," said Mr. Nightshade—

"My essay," said Mr. Trench—

"My sonata," said Mr. Chromatic—

"My claret," said Squire Headlong—

"My lectures," said Mr. Cranium—

"Vanity of vanities," said the Reverend Doctor Gaster, turning down an empty egg-shell, "all is vanity and vexation of spirit."

And by such means the disquisitions are never allowed to become tedious. 'Headlong Hall' contains some passages of invective against the errors of modern society, that have a remarkable likeness to certain views of Shelley's. We may pause to quote one sentence, as an example of Peacock's more earnest and more impassioned manner:—

"The youth of one sex is consumed in slavery, disappointment, and spleen; that of the other, in frantic folly and selfish intemperance; till, at length, on the necks of a couple so enfeebled, so perverted, so distempered both in body and soul, society throws the yoke of marriage, that yoke which, once riveted on the necks of its victims, clings to them like the poisoned garments of Nessus or Medea. What can be expected from these ill-assorted yoke-fellows, but that, like two ill-tempered hounds, coupled by a tyrannical sportsman, they should drag on their indissoluble fetter, snarling and growling, and pulling in different directions? What can be expected from their wretched offspring, but sickness and suffering, premature decrepitude, and untimely death? In this, as in every other institution of civilised society, avarice, luxury, and disease constitute the triangular harmony of the life of man."

Whether this is justly said may

be doubted; there can be no question that it is finely said.

The winter, 1815-16, was full of quiet pleasure. Shelley's house at Bishopgate, the eastern entrance to Windsor Park, was the rendezvous, Peacock walking over from Marlow, and Hogg less frequently walking down from London. 'This winter was,' as Mr. Hogg expressed it, 'a mere Atticism. Our studies were exclusively Greek.' Shelley was writing 'Alastor'; Peacock was finishing 'Headlong Hall,' and beginning 'Melincourt,' when the habitual restlessness took Shelley off to Switzerland. In August 1816 Shelley came back to Marlow, and took a house there, for the special design of being near Peacock. In December of the same year Harriet Shelley drowned herself in the Serpentine, and a few days afterwards Percy Shelley married Mary Godwin. Such were the events that surrounded the composition of 'Melincourt,' which was published in 1817. It is of all Peacock's works the most considerable in size, attaining almost to the usual novel standard, most of the others being far below it. Byron greatly admired it, and Shelley told Peacock that every one preferred it to his other books. It is difficult, however, to subscribe to this. 'Melincourt' is an enlargement of Lord Monboddos's fantastic notion of a civilised orang-outang, not like the celebrated one in 'Count Robert of Paris'—still a brute, though intelligent and tame—but an educated and elegant ape, practised in all the usages of society. Sir Oran Haut-Ton is a wild man of the Angola woods, caught very young, and carefully trained, who is put up to represent in Parliament the extremely rotten borough of Onevote. The only faculty he has been unable to gain is that of speech. He solaces himself with lonely hours of flute-

playing in the forest, and it is suggested that he may have been that resurrection of the visible Pan of which the Orphic Hymns prophesied. There is a charming heroine, Anthelia Melincourt, a lady quite after Mr. Peacock's heart, who reads Tasso, and desires to read Sophocles. Her the courtly but hirsute Sir Oran delivers from instant death in a roaring chasm. He forms for the lovely nymph the same kind of reverential attachment that the Satyr in Fletcher's 'Faithful Shepherdess' forms for Corin. Anthelia marries an ideal philanthropist, Mr. Forester, 'a disinterested cultivator of the rural virtues,' and the gentle Sir Oran Haut-Ton comes to live with them, learning in time every art but the art of speech. All this framework is very mad indeed, and the dialogues are less witty than usual.

This year of 1817 was a pleasant one at Marlow. Godwin and the Leigh Hunts often came down to see the Shelleys. There was a good deal of rowing and sailing, and Peacock and Shelley took long walks in every direction. In the summer the latter composed 'Laon and Cythna,' which afterwards became 'The Revolt of Islam'; and Mr. Peacock was one of those who most strenuously urged the omission of various passages which they rightly considered indiscreet. The friends were in the habit of frequently walking to London, through Uxbridge, and Peacock reports that, in spite of his delicate appearance, Shelley was never tired. Fragile as he looked, he had great muscular strength. But this happy time soon came to an end. Early in 1818 he left Marlow, and, after a short stay in London, left England in the March of that year, never to return. Peacock consoled himself by writing his third, and perhaps, on the whole, his most amusing novel, 'Nightmare Abbey.'

'Nightmare Abbey' is a skit upon the melancholy and transcendental romanticism that was just then in fashion, and which Peacock held in abomination. The name is that of a highly picturesque, semi-dilapidated mansion in Lincolnshire, between the sea and the fens, the property of Christopher Glowry, Esq., a gentleman of atrabilious temperament, and much troubled with blue devils. He is a widower; but he has one son, Scythrop, as melancholy as himself. This is intended as a portrait of Shelley. As it is dreary at Nightmare Abbey, a few congenial friends are invited down from London; amongst others, Mr. Flosky (S. T. Coleridge), 'a very lachrymose and morbid gentleman, of some note in the literary world. . . . The part of his character which recommended him to Mr. Glowry was his very fine sense of the grim and the tearful.' Some of this satirical portraiture of Coleridge is excellent. 'Mystery was his mental element. He lived in the midst of that visionary world, in which nothing is but what is not. He dreamed with his eyes open, and saw ghosts dancing round him at noontide. He had been in his youth an enthusiast for liberty, and had hailed the dawn of the French Revolution as the promise of a day that was to banish war and slavery, and every form of vice and misery from the face of the earth. Because this was not done, he deduced that nothing was done. . . . He plunged into the central opacity of Kantian metaphysics, and lay *perdu* several years in transcendental darkness, till the common daylight of common sense became intolerable to his eyes.' Then there is an amusing Mr. Toobad, who is always announcing in a doleful voice, after every mishap, 'The devil is come among you, having great wrath.'

There is also a very witty, genial, and worldly divine, the Rev. Mr. Larynx, and, in fact, a very nice little group of what may be called the usual Pavonian phantoms! Scythrop, left alone in the Abbey, has become seized with a passion for reforming the world, passes whole mornings immersed in gloomy reverie, and publishes a treatise on the regeneration of the human species. Only seven copies are sold; but these, he avers, will be the seven golden candlesticks that will illuminate the world. He has a tower in the Abbey overlooking the sea, and, introducing a dumb carpenter into it, he fills the walls with sliding pannels and secret chambers. Such is his condition when his father returns from London, and the guests arrive. Among them is Miss Marionetta O'Carroll, a very blooming and accomplished lady, who immediately falls in love with Scythrop, who becomes an easy conquest. Scythrop, like Shelley, had received many 'pure anticipated cognitions of combinations of beauty and intelligence, which, he had some misgivings, were not exactly realised in his cousin Marionetta; but, in spite of these misgivings, he soon became distractedly in love.' All this kind of amatory oscillation Peacock had seen too much of already. Marionetta is a portrait of poor Harriet Shelley. Mr. Glowry objects to the match, as Marionetta has no fortune, and requests her to desist her flirtations:—

'But when Marionetta hinted that she was to leave the Abbey immediately, Scythrop snatched from its repository his ancestor's skull, filled it with Madeira, and, presenting himself before Mr. Glowry, threatened to drink off the contents if Mr. Glowry did not immediately promise that Marionetta should not be taken from the Abbey without her own consent. Mr. Glowry, who took the Madeira to be some deadly beverage, gave the required promise in dismal panic. Scythrop returned to Marionetta with a joyful heart, and drank the Madeira by the way.'

Of course a transcendental lady, of brilliant beauty, comes to separate him from Marionetta. The Unknown has been outlawed for her republican sentiments, and she takes refuge in Scythrop's tower, behind the sliding panels. 'Scythrop found,' like Shelley, 'that his soul had a greater capacity of love than the image of Marionetta had filled.' His esoteric and his exoteric love give him the greatest perplexity; he loves each when he is alone in her presence. 'The old proverb concerning two strings in a bow gave him some gleams of comfort; but that concerning two stools occurred to him more frequently, and covered his forehead with a cold perspiration.' Meanwhile the party below has been joined by Mr. Asterias, the invertebrate zoologist, and by Mr. Cypress, the poet, in other words, Lord Byron. Mr. Cypress mainly talks 'Childe Harold' reduced to prose; but he also sings certain dolorous ditties, in which the Byronic manner is superbly imitated, such as:

'There is a fever of the spirit,
The brand of Cain's unresting doom,
Which, in the lone dark souls that bear
it,
Glows like the lamp in Tullia's tomb';

or joins in bacchanalian choruses with Mr. Hilary and the Rev. Mr. Larynx. We will quote one of these, as a good example of Peacock's happiest poetic manner:—

'Seamen three! what men be ye?
Gotham's three wise men we be.
Whither in your bowl so free?
To rake the moon from out the sea.
The bowl goes trim. The moon doth
shine.
And our ballast is old wine;
And your ballast is old wine.'

'Who art thou, so fast adrift?
I am he they call Old Care.
Here on board we will thee lift.
No: I may not enter there.
Wherefore so? 'Tis Jove's decree,
In a bowl Care may not be;
In a bowl Care may not be.'

'Fear ye not the waves that roll?
No: in charmed bowl we swim.
What the charm that floats the bowl?
Water may not pass the brim.
The bowl goes trim. The moon doth
shine.
And our ballast is old wine;
And your ballast is old wine.'

This is one of the happiest extravagances that the Vinous Muse ever inspired; the wit is of the genuine order, terse and quick, and the versification is perfection. 'Nightmare Abbey' closes with the complete discomfiture of Scythrop, who falls with a suddenness that is almost tragical between the two chairs of his affection. The novel reached Shelley at Leghorn in the summer of 1819. He wrote, 'I am delighted with "Nightmare Abbey." I think Scythrop a character admirably conceived and executed, and I know not how to praise sufficiently the lightness, chastity, and strength of the language of the whole. It, perhaps, exceeds all your works in this.' To this criticism nothing can be added, except a word to say how irresistibly amusing, absolutely laughter-provoking, the conversations and episodes are.

Time crept on, and changes came. Marlow knew them all no more. Peacock came up to London in 1819, and accepted a clerkship in the Examiner's Office of the East India Company. His novels had introduced him to the notice of the directors, and he used to say that he owed all his success in life to his Greek quotations. After his examination his papers were returned to him with this brief but flattering remark: 'Nothing superfluous and nothing wanting.' The 'Caernarvonshire nymph,' Miss Jane Gryffyd, now returned to his thoughts, and in 1820 he married her—a fact which he communicated to Shelley, then at Pisa, in a laconic and business-like manner that amused and sti-

mulated the poet into the passage of his 'Letter to Maria Gisborne,' of which some lines have been already quoted. Now, for the first and last time in his life, Peacock mixed a little in literary society. Horace and James Smith were genial neighbours, and Bryan Waller Proctor; but the most appreciated of all was an extraordinary person, Mr. Thomas Taylor, commonly called 'Pagan Taylor,' who affected to restore the worship of the classical deities, and who delighted Peacock by pouring out libations to Jupiter, and by sacrificing lambs to the immortal gods in the back parlour of his lodgings, until his landlord threatened to turn him out if he did it again. This lively and whimsical individual always addressed Mr. Peacock as 'Greeky Peeky,' and was on the most familiar terms in the house. Meanwhile 'Rhododaphne' was published, a very uninteresting, meritorious, obscure epic poem; and, what was more important, a new novel, 'Maid Marian,' was begun. Composition seems to have been far less rapid since the cares of business gathered round. Peacock was not a man meant for business. 'Maid Marian' was ready in 1822; but just before it appeared a heart-rending letter from Mary Shelley announced the tragedy in the Bay of Spezzia, and the loss of her 'transcendent Shelley.' 'Maid Marian' was a great success. It was full of romantic ballads, which pleased the popular taste, and Planché dramatised it as one of those little English operas he was then trying to introduce in imitation of the dramas of Gozzi. It was performed with approval at Covent Garden. The novel is a charming story of pastoral loves in the green shaw, and all the wonders of Sherwood. It tells how Robin Hood and Maid Marian dwelt and reigned in the

forest, ranging the glades and the greenwoods from the matins of the lark to the vespers of the nightingale, and administering natural justice according to Robin's ideas of rectifying the inequalities of human condition. Unlike Peacock's earlier works, this one is almost wholly poetical and genial. His usual vein of satire is laid aside. We are occupied with the pleasant sights of leaf and flower, the pleasant sounds of bird and bee, with deeds of prowess done underneath the moon, or trophies of free fight before the greenwood. Friar Tuck, however, is the usual Pavonian type of a greedy, worldly, shrewd, and humorous priest, who confesses the sylvan company, inflicting flasks of canary upon them for their sins, but ready in his ghostly grace to relieve them himself with a vicarious penance, and pour the redundancy of the burden down his own throat.

Directly after the publication of 'Maid Marian' Mr. Peacock was promoted to the post of Assistant Examiner of Indian Correspondence. According to his own account, the duties were not excessively onerous. He came at 10 A.M., and breakfasted at the office. This is his own account of how the day was spent:—

'From ten to eleven, ate a breakfast for seven;
From eleven to noon, to begin 'twas too soon;
From twelve to one, asked, "What's to be done?"
From one to two, found nothing to do;
From two to three began to forsee
That from three to four would be a damned bore.'

However, he seems to have found enough to do to check his literary exuberance, for no new book appeared until 1829, when he brought out another historical novel, 'The Misfortunes of Elphin,' a story of Welsh history in the beginning of the sixth century.

The names of the characters are so uncouth, and the record of their deeds so intensely and palpably mythical, that it is not easy to take much interest in them; but this book is not without qualities of very high merit. It contains an unusually large proportion of verse, and this nearly always in Peacock's most successful manner. What can possibly be more spirited, in its half-savage, half-humorous swing, than this song of predatory tribes, the 'War-Song of Dinas Vawr'?—

- ‘The mountain sheep are sweeter,
But the valley sheep are fatter;
We therefore deemed it meet
To carry off the latter.
We made an expedition;
We met an host and quelled it;
We forced a strong position,
And killed the men who held it.
- ‘On Dyfed's richest valley,
Where herds of kine were browsing,
We made a mighty sally,
To furnish our carousing.
Fierce warriors rushed to meet us;
We met them and o'erthrew them;
They struggled hard to beat us,
But we conquered them and slew them.
- ‘As we drove our prize at leisure,
The king marched forth to catch us;
His rage surpassed all measure,
But his people could not match us.
He fled to his hall-pillars;
And ere our force we led off,
Some sacked his house and cellars,
While others cut his head off.
- * * * * *
- ‘We brought away from battle,
And much their land bemoaned them,
Two thousand head of cattle,
And the head of him who owned them:
Ednyfed, King of Dyfed,
His head was borne before us;
His wine and beasts supplied our feasts,
And his overthrow, our chorus.’

From a serious point of view, the most interesting and curious section of the ‘Misfortunes of Elphin’ is that in which is described the breaking-in of the sea through the dykes to the complete destruction of the ancient kingdom of Carodigion, which used to fill up

what is now Cardigan Bay. Peacock has made use of a legend which records that this terrible event happened one night while the drunken king was carousing in his hall, and he has worked it out with great power and picturesqueness. King Arthur and the Round Table, too, are brought into ‘The Misfortunes of Elphin.’

‘The Misfortunes of Elphin’ is the least-formed of all Peacock's stories. Indeed, it can hardly be said to be a connected romance at all. It was published in the novel form in order to give the author an opportunity of stringing together his translations of the Triads and other early Welsh poetry. It was not, however, possible to Peacock, even if he were treating Celtic history of twelve centuries ago, to restrain himself from sarcastic comment on passing events, and in the speech of Prince Seithenyn, first commissioner to the king in charge of the dyke that protects the lowlands from being overrun by the advancing sea, he paraphrases, with ludicrous exactness, Canning's rhetorical utterances against reform in 1825. But two years after the publication of ‘The Misfortunes of Elphin,’ in 1831, the very year before the great Reform Bill was passed, there appeared Peacock's most studied and perfect novel, ‘Crotchet Castle,’ and in this he made full amends for any seeming tendency to radicalism, by merciless abuse of everything ‘liberal,’ and violent defence of Toryism through the mouthpiece of the clerical hero the Rev. Dr. Folliott. Peacock's expressions of political opinion oscillated between the two extremes of unbending high Torydom and levelling and revolutionary radicalism, and it is very difficult to discover what his real convictions were. Perhaps it is safest to conclude he had none. How-

ever, his bitter animosity to the clergy, whom in all his previous novels he had held up to ridicule and aversion as greedy, stupid, worldly, and hypocritical, seems to have faded away in 'Crotchet Castle,' where Dr. Folliott is a delightful creature, full of Peacockian enthusiasms, and the life and soul of the book. Here is an example of his, or rather of Peacock's, fantastic invective. The theme, of course, is the 'Edinburgh Review':—

'There is a set of persons in your city, Mr. MacQuedy, who concoct, every three or four months, a thing which they call a review; a sort of sugar-plum manufacturers to the Whig aristocracy . . . Well, sir, these gentlemen have practised as much dishonesty as, in any other department than literature, would have brought the practitioner under the cognisance of the police. In politics they have run with the hare and hunted with the hound. In criticism, they have, knowingly and unblushingly, given false characters, both for good and for evil; sticking at no art of misrepresentation to clear out of the field of literature all who stood in the way of the interests of their own clique. They have never allowed their own profound ignorance of anything (Greek, for instance) to throw even an air of hesitation into their oracular decisions on the matter. They set an example of profligate contempt for truth, of which the success was in proportion to the effrontery.'

Indeed, if for nothing else, 'Crotchet Castle' would be exceedingly amusing for the satiric wrath fulminated on all sides with an impartiality and a vehemence worthy of Landor. Wordsworth and Southey, too, as Mr. Wilful Wontsee and Mr. Rumblesack Shantsee, are ridiculed, and Coleridge appears again, as in 'Nightmare Abbey,' to be laughed at and abused as the transcendental poet, Mr. Skionar. Towards the end of the novel, the whole party set out on that excursion up the Thames and by the Ellesmere Canal into North Wales to which we have

already referred. From that point the story becomes very pretty and romantic, and contains, what are rare in Peacock's work, some fine and detailed descriptions of nature, drawn with much delicacy. One, in particular, describing the place, a rock overhanging a mountain-pool, where the heroine fell asleep, lying along the trunk of a prone and mossy tree, is delightful in its romantic and original force, and would be well worth quoting, were it not so long. This same heroine, an adorable creature, well-read in the old Italian poets and in Rousseau, is saved from her perilous position by the tact and prowess of the handsome young antiquary, Mr. Chainmail, who afterwards marries her.

'Crotchet Castle' was the last of Peacock's works for nearly thirty years. The year after it appeared his mother died, and her loss was a blow from which he never seemed thoroughly to recover. He was accustomed to look to her for constant sympathy in his work; during a literary life stretching over twenty-nine years, much as he had written, he had read it all to her, and when she was no more by his side to encourage or to criticise, he seemed to feel that the pleasure and interest of composition were gone. In addition to this loss, the death of his favourite child, and the confirmed illness of his wife, he entered upon fresh and arduous duties at the India House, which diverted his thoughts more widely than ever from literature. His was a nature that could only work with the imagination when all was quiet and serene around, and when there was no strain on the mind at any other point. In 1836, the retirement of James Mill put him in the position of Examiner to the East India Company, which he did not relinquish till John Stuart Mill

took it in 1856. For twenty years he did not publish anything at all, and retired so completely from the literary world, that it was not surprising that the same busy world forgot almost his name. He became absorbed in his work of superintending the construction of light iron-clad steamers for transit to India, and in laying before committees of the House of Commons schemes for the adoption of a similar system with regard to men-of-war. In 1852, though then nearly seventy years old, he recommenced his literary work, and for ten years was a regular contributor to 'Fraser's Magazine,' concluding by writing one more novel, 'Gryll Grange,' when he was seventy-five. This book bears a strong family likeness to its predecessors, particularly to 'Crotchet Castle,' but though it is most wonderful as the work of a man so very old, and who had so long discontinued novel-writing, it is not up to the mark of that book or of 'Nightmare Abbey.' It is more full of learning than any work of Peacock's; it bristles with quota-

tion, and Aristophanes, Petronius Arbiter and Bojardo are especially laid under contribution and largely quoted from in the original or in translation. But there is a distinct tendency to reproduce what was most delightful in the earlier books. For instance, the much-admired chapter on the Sleeping Venus in 'Crotchet Castle' is echoed in one on the Bald Venus in 'Gryll Grange.'

After 1862 he ceased to write. A fire that broke out in his house at Halliford shook him very much. It threatened to be serious, and he was brought down into his library to be among his books, at his own wish. The curate of the place rushed in to offer an asylum in his own house, but Mr. Peacock refused to move, and startled the poor ecclesiastic by roaring out, with great warmth and energy, 'By the immortal gods I will not move!' He did not long survive this shock, but passed away on the 23rd of January, 1866, and was buried at Shepperton, on the banks of the river he had loved so tenderly and known so long.

E. W. G.



THE COLONEL'S WIFE.

WHEN we first heard that the Colonel was to bring home a wife when he returned from leave, we all entirely disbelieved the rumour.

The idea that Colonel Carlton would ever marry seemed utterly absurd: we had all settled *that* years ago; and, indeed, in every respect he appeared the most confirmed old bachelor imaginable.

When my husband first joined the regiment, years before the time I am speaking of, Colonel then Major Carlton, used sometimes to be made the object of attack by some match-making mother or mature damsel; but even these had desisted long since: and at length it seemed to be a recognised fact, that nothing would ever induce him to change his condition. His extreme unsociability, even with his own brother officers, and the great dislike he evinced to ladies' society, strengthened us in this opinion; so that, when one morning we saw the rumour confirmed by the announcement of his marriage in the paper, it created quite a little stir among us; and when my husband read it out to me at breakfast: 'On the 28th inst., at St. Jude's, Parkhill, Surrey, Colonel Thomas Carlton, to Mabel, youngest daughter of John Percy, Esq.,' I confess that I put down my cup in quite a little flutter of excitement and curiosity. 'So it is true, after all,' said my husband. 'I'm not easily surprised, but I must own this does astonish me. I did not think any woman living could have caught Carlton.'

'Caught?' retorted I, rather indignantly; 'how do you know she caught him? I am sure I pity her, poor thing, whoever she is;

his fussy, fidgety ways would drive *me* distracted in a month.'

'Ah! yes, but then you've been spoilt, old lady, by having caught *me*.'

'By having caught a goose,' I reply. 'But seriously, George, dear, I wonder what sort of woman could have been induced to marry such an old fossil as Colonel Carlton? You must confess it's not likely to be an enviable fate.'

'Oh! I suppose he's found some middle-aged woman with money. By-the-way, Mary, you'll be deposed from your position as senior lady. I hope, for your sake, she'll be pleasant, and not take the entire management of your schools and old women out of your hands.' And so saying, my lord and master betook himself to parade.

As I went about my usual household occupations that morning, my thoughts would continually wander away to Colonel Carlton's new wife. It was a matter of some importance to me that she should be nice and pleasant. The Colonel having been so long a bachelor, I, in virtue of my husband's position as senior major, had had all arrangements for the comfort of the women and children vested in my hands; and I was conscious of a slight thrill of vexation, as I reflected that I might have to give all this up to a woman, quite unacquainted with the troubles and worries which beset the soldier's wife, and with which I had been familiar for the last fifteen years.

I had my own pet theories, too, about the schools, and one or two clothing-clubs I had established; and I knew I could not bear to see them upset without a pang. Of course, it did not follow that

they *would* be upset; but thinking it probable that a middle-aged woman, such as the Colonel's wife would surely be, would very likely have theories of her own also, I tried to prepare myself to surrender the reins of government with a good grace. I did not think I should mind it so much, if I saw her tender and pitiful to my poor women; but should she be (oh! horror) a strong-minded woman, full of wise sayings and good advice, I felt as if I should be obliged to rebel against her authority.

Going out in the course of the day, I met Captain Davis's wife, a nice, bright, merry little Irish-woman, who seemed to have friends everywhere, and to know something of every one. Of course we spoke of the Colonel's marriage.

'I know something of some Percys in Surrey,' said the little woman, 'neighbours of some friends of mine; but Mr. Percy is a briefless barrister, who has never done any good either for himself or anybody else, and has a large family. I remember hearing of him when I was there, but I never saw him. I don't fancy he was over respectable,' continued she, confidentially; 'but of course Colonel Carlton would be the last man to marry into a family of *that* sort; besides which, Mr. Percy's youngest daughter is scarcely twenty, so of course they *can't* be the people. Colonel Carlton would never make such a goose of himself at his time of life as to marry a *girl*,' concludes she, disrespectfully.

'My dear,' I say, oracularly; 'no man is ever too old to make a goose of himself; though I must confess that I don't expect to find Mrs. Carlton much under forty.'

'Well, whether she's twenty or forty, I've no doubt she will live

quite long enough to repent her marriage,' Mrs. Davis says, with a little laugh. 'I don't think the saying about an old man's darling is likely to hold good in this case—do you?'

'Hardly,' replied I, smiling; for, truth to tell, the idea of Colonel Carlton ever petting anything living, whether wife, child, or dog, seemed absurd. He certainly was, as the young officers used to say of him, 'as hard as nails!' 'However, Mrs. Davis, let us hope for the best,' I say, with a twinge of remorse, for it seems unkind to settle the poor woman's fate off-hand as we have been doing: 'perhaps a good sensible middle-aged wife may humanise the Colonel a little.'

'Ah! I wish he'd retire, and let your husband take command, for you'd be the dearest Colonel's wife in the world,' observes the affectionate little soul, to whom I had once been able to render a slight service.

'Hush!' I say, for she is giving voice to some ambitious thoughts which have been worrying me all the morning; 'Colonel Carlton is a good officer, and would be a loss to the regiment; and, Pussie, dear' (my pet name for my little friend), 'let us all welcome her cordially among us: remember it is a trying position for any woman to occupy just at first.'

Pussie gives me an impetuous hug as we part in my garden, under the shade of a friendly hawthorn. 'I will be sure to be very good to her, if it's only to please you,' is her parting salutation.

For a couple of months we heard no more of the Colonel and his bride, and had almost given up talking of them, when one morning my husband, coming in from parade, said to me, 'Well, Mary, your curiosity will be gra-

tified at last. The Carltons are back.'

'Is his leave up already? dear me! I am sorry,' said I, thinking of my schools. 'However, it can't be helped. Have you seen her? What is she like? Where are they staying? and when do you think we had better call?'

'One question at a time, my dear. They are staying at the Royal, and I really think it would be only kind if you called at once. As she is quite a stranger, you might be of some use to her.'

'We will call this afternoon,' I decide promptly. 'But have you seen her? Now don't be provoking, but tell me the truth.'

'No, I've not seen her.'

'Has any one?'

'Yes. Smith came down from town by the same train.'

'And what is she like?'

'My dear child, I really didn't ask.'

And he really hadn't. A want of curiosity, for which I did not forgive him for at least ten minutes.

However, we agreed that we would call in the afternoon; and I was so impatient to start, that I was ready full half an hour before the time, and had to wait for my husband, who did not come in until my patience was nearly exhausted.

However, in due time we arrived at the Royal. Mrs. Carlton was at home, the waiter said, but the Colonel had just gone out; would we walk upstairs. We followed him upstairs and into the room, and—I was struck speechless with surprise! There rose out of the depths of a luxurious arm-chair, a lovely child. A fairy-like creature, with bright auburn hair and large beseeching blue eyes, a tender, half-tremulous smile lurking round her lips, as though she were imploring you to love her, and my heart went out to her at

once; and since the moment I first clasped her hand in mine that afternoon we have been firm friends.

Of course on that occasion I did not learn much of her beyond her youth and extreme loveliness. She was gentle and quiet in manner; self-possessed beyond her years; and, in spite of her childlike appearance, seemed quite at home and at ease in her new position.

The impression she made on every one in the regiment was decidedly favourable; although, of course, the comments on Colonel Carlton's folly in marrying so young a girl were numerous. Nevertheless, the men were all vanquished by her beauty, and the women—in spite of it. She never interfered with anybody; my schools and poor women were left entirely in my hands as before; and, though she was invariably gentle and courteous to all who approached her, she never made a favourite, and consequently (as those know who have ever been one of a little world like ours) never an enemy. The only approach to an intimacy which she made was with myself. She would drop in occasionally for an hour's chat; and was invariably a pleasant companion, talking on all subjects with a more than average amount of intelligence; but the talk never dropped into a confidential strain. She never mentioned her husband, or alluded to her girlhood; nor did she manifest a healthy interest in the arrangements of her new home, as a young wife should. It pained me to see her so apparently indifferent to everything; but once, when I tried to draw her on to speak of her girlish days, she answered with so much constraint, and the subject was evidently so distasteful to her, that I left it at once, and, indeed, she did not come near me for fully

ten days afterwards. Colonel Carlton remained as unsociable as ever; never taking his wife anywhere unless absolutely obliged, and never by any chance asking any one inside his doors.

It was a dull life for her, poor young thing! and the Colonel but a dull companion; but if she found it so we never knew—the gentle, placid manner never varied. Whether the Colonel married her for love or for money we did not know either. His manner to her was kind, certainly; but he scarcely ever noticed her, left her a great deal alone, and, in fact, departed from his bachelor habits as little as he possibly could.

One thing about her pleased me much. Although she was so young, so much alone, and so lovely, she never gave any of the gossips of the regiment a chance of meddling with her name. All the admiration she excited, and it was much, she received with the same quiet indifference which she manifested about everything; and her would-be admirers were speedily made aware that their attentions bored her.

The Carltons had been married rather more than a year, during which time I had seen a good deal of Mrs. Carlton, and, though we were not exactly intimate, we were on very neighbourly terms, when one day George came in with the news that we were to have a new arrival in the regiment. Captain Smith had effected an exchange with a Captain Trenham, who did not wish to return to Bermuda, where his regiment was then quartered.

'A very nice fellow he is, they say,' observed my husband. 'And he must be well off, too; for he has given Smith a large sum for the exchange.'

'It's dear at any money,' I cannot help saying; for I had been in

Bermuda with our regiment, and remember with a shudder its heat, oily calms, mosquitoes, and cock-roaches.

'So it is,' acquiesced my husband, with an expressive shrug; 'but needs must, you know, when somebody drives. And I fancy Smith has rather outrun the constable.'

A few days after this, the band had been playing on the parade, and one or two friends had come in with me, after it was over, to enjoy that favourite dissipation of our sex, 'an afternoon tea,' when George walked in, followed by a tall stranger, whom he introduced to me as Captain Trenham.

In the uncertain light of a waning autumnal afternoon I could not see him very distinctly; but the voice in which he answered my greeting was pleasant and manly, and seemed to belong naturally to his tall, athletic figure.

'Let me introduce you to your new Colonel's wife,' I said, after shaking hands with him. 'Captain Trenham—Mrs. Carlton.'

Mabel inclined her head slightly, without speaking, and with even more than her usual coldness; but in so doing the light from the fire fell full on her beautiful face.

Captain Trenham started.

'Is it possible that I see Miss Percy?' he said, in a low, eager voice.

Mabel Carlton did not reply, so I answered for her. 'Miss Percy once—now Mrs. Carlton. I had no idea you were old acquaintances.'

'I can scarcely aspire to the honour of being called an acquaintance of Mrs. Carlton's,' said Captain Trenham, with a slight tinge of sarcasm in his tone.

'No, oh no!' said Mrs. Carlton, hastily. 'We knew each other slightly years ago—yes, years ago,' she repeated dreamily.

'Very slightly,' echoed Captain

Trenham, emphatically; and, crossing the room, began talking 'shop' to my husband.

I looked from one to the other. What could it mean, I wondered! But Mabel had relapsed into her usual placidity, and was talking quietly with Mrs. Bruce (the other major's wife, and mother of ten children); and Captain Trenham seemed completely to have forgotten her existence. Still I felt as if a little drama had been played before my eyes, to which I had not the key; and I went and sat down by Mabel, in a little flutter of protecting fondness, for which I was at a loss to account. As I laid my hand gently on hers, she turned and looked at me, and I saw that she was very pale.

'Are you not well?' I whispered.

'Quite well,' answered she steadily; 'but I am tired, and would like to go home.'

'So you shall, dear. George, will you see Mrs. Carlton to her gate?' (The Carltons had taken a pleasant house at the bottom of that shady lane which leads into our road.) 'It is rather late for her to go alone.'

'Certainly, my dear, certainly. Just one moment, Mrs. Carlton, while I get my hat.'

Captain Trenham hesitated for half a second, and then stepping forward, said:

'If you will permit me, Major, I am going Mrs. Carlton's way, and shall be happy to see her home, if she will allow me.'

Mabel raised her eyes, and looked at him steadfastly for a moment, and then, bowing her head, she laid her hand on his arm, and they two went out into the darkness together.

On going round the next morning to see whether Mrs. Carlton had recovered from the fatigue she had complained of, I was surprised to

find her looking more animated, and brighter than I had ever seen her.

'You look like a rosebud this morning,' I said, admiringly, as I kissed her. 'I need not ask if you have got over your fatigue.'

'Oh, I was only a wee bit tired,' said she. 'I was all right again after a rest.'

'I hope Captain Trenham proved an agreeable escort. He seems nice, and George thinks he will be quite an acquisition,' observed I. 'It will be a novelty to have a rich man in the regiment. They say he has brought down three horses with him.'

'Has he?' said she. 'He was very, very poor at the time I knew him.'

'When was that?' asked I.

'Oh, a long time ago. Mary,' said she, abruptly changing the subject, 'how is it you are always so happy and contented? I always quote you as the happiest woman I know.'

'So I am, very happy indeed. But do not fall into the common error, dear, of thinking your own troubles worse than anybody else's. We all know best where our own shoes pinch; and I have had my troubles, like the rest of the world,' said I, thinking of youthful struggles with poverty, and, alas! of an empty cradle, a wee voice hushed for ever, and toddling footsteps whose echo was always in my ears.

'But they are far back in the past now,' said she, caressingly; 'and your husband loves you so, and is so proud of you, that I should think you wanted nothing else. Was he your first love, Mary?'

'Indeed he was,' answered I, a tear standing in my eyes at the recollection. 'He was but a poor lieutenant when we married; and we had a hard struggle for it, until a rich uncle died and left him his

fortune. We did not begin at the top of the tree, as you have done, little lady.'

Mabel froze immediately, as she always did at the slightest allusion to her marriage, and began speaking of something else directly. I felt hurt at her manner; but melted at once when, on wishing me 'Good-bye,' she said, 'I do love you, Mary. Don't—*don't* be vexed with me; you are the only friend I have,' looking at me at the same time wistfully out of her star-like eyes.

We kissed each other tenderly, as we women do; and I promised myself that, if she ever needed a friend, I would be one in deed as well as in name.

At the garden-gate I met Colonel Carlton. We were passing each other with rather a formal greeting (for I confess that the Colonel was no great favourite of mine), when he turned back, as if moved by a sudden impulse.

'I am much obliged to you for your kindness to my wife, Mrs. Maclean. She appreciates your friendship greatly, and I am much indebted to you,' said the Colonel, in his rather pompous manner; and then, as if fearing to await my answer, he raised his hat hastily, and disappeared into the house.

Somewhat after that my mind was set at rest as to whether Colonel Carlton cared for his young wife. I seemed to know that in his own way he loved her, and would make her happy if he only knew how. But, poor man! he who had been so long a bachelor how should he understand?

Captain Trenham at once obtained a great popularity in the regiment. Every one liked him; and to my astonishment—for I could not forget that first greeting in my drawing-room—he and Mabel Carlton became great friends. She would rouse out of her lan-

guor when he approached her; and would be gracious, and sweet, and charming to him, in a way which made her wondrous loveliness seem greater than ever. Her eyes would sparkle, and smiles dimple round her lips, and her sweet, low laughter make music in our ears. She looked like a happy child in this mood; quite different from the rather stately little lady she generally seemed. But I noticed that it never appeared in her husband's presence; and after a time I became conscious, though I tried to shut my eyes to it, that she and Captain Trenham rather avoided each other before him.

I once asked Captain Trenham where and when he had known Mrs. Carlton; but he did not satisfy my curiosity, and was as reticent on the subject as she had been. Whenever they met, however, he was devoted to her; hovering round her like her shadow, anticipating her wants, and watching every movement that she made. At times (and these became more frequent as the days wore away) she would be cold, and even repellant in her manner to him; and then, if he seemed hurt at her caprice, her mood would change, and she would be more perilously fascinating than ever.

In a little world like ours this could not continue long without affording food for gossip; and Mrs. Carlton's name, which one short year ago was spared by the most malicious, was soon never mentioned without the epithet of 'flirt,' or 'coquette,' being attached to it. She was too lovely for women not to be jealous of her; and, monopolising the attentions of the most eligible man in the regiment was looked upon as an unpardonable crime. Mothers with marriageable daughters regarded her as a dangerous enemy, and scandal began to be busy with

the sweet name, which had become as dear to me as a sister's; for Mabel, with her fragile beauty and the sweet caressing ways she reserved only for me, had twined herself round my heart. I did what I could to stem the current of popular opinion; but it set too strong for me. People began to look upon me as thoroughly infatuated with Mrs. Carlton, and no longer mentioned her before me; but I knew that the scandal-mongers were busy with her fair fame behind my back, and began to fear that, unless something were done to stop them, it would soon be effectually blackened. I determined, though reluctantly, to speak to Mabel, especially as my husband said to me one day, 'Mary, your little friend is getting herself talked about. I think you should give her a hint not to flirt so much with Trenham.'

However, it was so distasteful a duty, that I put it off from day to day. Mabel, I thought, looked ill and worn, and I did not want to worry her. She had dark circles round her eyes, which told of sleepless nights, and her spirits were variable and capricious.

A few weeks had elapsed since my husband had spoken to me, and I still shrunk from advising her; when one Sunday afternoon, as I was returning from my school, I came suddenly upon Mabel and Captain Trenham walking together. He was speaking rapidly and vehemently, and she, looking pale and excited, was listening with her eyes raised to his. It was getting dusk; and they were so self-absorbed that they passed me without seeing me.

I felt annoyed at Mabel's imprudence. Colonel Carlton, I knew, had left home for a few days; and here was she giving fresh food for scandal. That she was anything more than imprudent never

even crossed my mind. Her face was so *angelic*, that it was impossible to associate a thought of wrong with her. Still I decided, as I sat brooding over the fire on my return home, that I must take heart of grace, and speak to her without delay. Lost in these thoughts, I did not hear a light footfall on the carpet; and I started as a hand fell on my shoulder, and, looking up, I saw her standing beside me.

'Why, Mabel,' I said, 'you came in like a spirit; and, indeed,' I continued, as the flickering firelight fell on her face, 'you look like one. How very wan your little face is, my child; and how cold your hands are! What have you been doing to yourself?'

I drew a low chair to the fire for her; but she pushed it back; and, seating herself on the rug at my feet, clasped my hand in hers, and rested her pale cheek against it.

'Let me sit here, Mary,' she said, 'at your feet.'

I stroked her bright hair with my disengaged hand; and for some minutes we both sat silent, I considering in my mind how best to put into words what I had to say.

'Mabel,' I at last found courage to begin, 'you said once that I was the only friend you had. Will you let me be a true friend, and give you a little advice, which may, perhaps, be unpalatable?' She moved her head, so as to let her lips rest on my hand, but did not answer; so I continued, 'I am much older than you, dear Mabel, and more versed in the ways of the world; and I know how soon a young wife, from mere thoughtlessness, may get hard things said of her.' Mabel moved uneasily, but still did not speak. 'I am quite sure that you hardly estimate the imprudence of being so intimate

with Captain Trenham. It is impossible to stop ill-natured people's tongues, and you are too lovely, dear,' said I, caressing her bent head, 'to escape their malice, if you give them a chance of gossiping about you. Why do you receive Captain Trenham's attentions with such evident pleasure?'

'Why?' exclaimed Mrs. Carlton, starting to her feet. 'You want to know why? Because Charlie Trenham is the only man I have ever loved.'

'Oh, Mabel!'

'Yes,' she went on, vehemently, 'I loved him long, long before I was sold to gratify my father's ambition, and my step-mother's jealousy. What was it to them that I went to the altar with a lie upon my lips? What did they care, though my girl's heart should be broken by their unholy bargain. Yes; Charlie and I were engaged, and I loved him—oh, how I loved him! But they drove him from me because he was poor; lied to me about him, and threatened and goaded me into my hateful marriage. And I, poor fool that I was, how could I have been so weak, or have believed that Charlie would have been false to me? Oh, Charlie, Charlie!' she sobbed, as she fell on her knees beside me, and hid her face in her hands.

I was horrified. In my worst forebodings I had never imagined anything so bad as this. How strange it seemed to me, as I looked from the calm autumn of my middle age on the young tempest-tossed soul beside me. I let her passion have its way, and when it had spent itself in hysterical tears, I soothed her pitifully, as if she had still been the child she looked.

'Mabel,' I said, 'Captain Trenham must leave this, leave the regiment, exchange, *anything*—I went on excitedly, 'he must not stay here to break your heart, and

ruin your fair fame. Why was he so utterly selfish as to join the regiment your husband commanded?'

'He did not know it.'

'But he knows it now; and is playing a game, which may be sport to him, but will certainly be death to you, my child, my poor child.' I mourned, as I looked at her pale, tear-stained cheeks. 'He must and shall go, Mabel. You must *make* him go; it will kill you if this goes on much longer.'

'He goes away on three months' leave to-morrow,' Mabel said, with a deep, burning blush suffusing her pale cheek.

'Thank Heaven for that!' I cried, fully resolving in my own mind that my George should see him long before it elapsed, and persuade him to leave the regiment. 'Mabel, you ought to thank Heaven, too, that he is going.'

'Hush, hush!' she says, shudderingly. 'You do not know—you cannot guess. Ah! Mary, has any one ever suffered as I have?'

Ah! sublime selfishness of youth that knows no suffering but its own!

'Many,' I reply, mournfully, 'and many will again. You must be strong to suffer, Mabel, and you must tread your path in life without repining.'

I draw her nearer to me; and speak of duties to be fulfilled, of that comfort which is not of earth, and prophesy renewed peace, and, if not happiness, at least calmness and content. She listens in silence, only now and then drawing a long, shuddering sigh, and nervously clasping and unclasping her fingers.

At last she rises to go, and I put on my bonnet to accompany her. 'Come in to Mrs. Bruce's with

me,' I say, as we pass the door, 'and hear the children sing their hymns before they go to church.' She draws back, but I use a gentle force, and compel her to enter with me; I think the pure young voices will do her good.

The childish trebles seem to me as sweet as a choir of angels, as the familiar notes of the evening hymn float through the hushed room.

'Lucy is not here to-night,' says Mrs. Bruce. 'I do not like any of my children to be absent from our Sunday-evening singing. We always have had it, and then I know those who are away are thinking of it and of us,' says the tender mother, thinking of her sailor boy.

As we leave them again when the singing is ended, she draws me aside to comment on Mabel's changed appearance.

'How ill Mrs. Carlton looks? I am sure she wants nursing and care; but she cannot have a better friend than you,' says the kind woman, as she presses my hand.

I find Mabel waiting for me at her own gate.

'You must not come in to-night, Mary,' she says; 'I should like to be alone. Good-night, dear, dear Mary. God bless you for all your kindness to me.' She clings to me for a moment almost convulsively.

'You are still a little hysterical,' I say, practically. 'Go to bed at once like a good child, and come and see me to-morrow.'

'To-morrow' she echoes, wearily; and once more clasping me closely to her, she turns and disappears under the shadow of the trees.

The next day one thing after another occurred to prevent my going over to Mrs. Carlton's, and, to my surprise, she did not come

to me; so in the evening, seeing my husband cosily settled with his feet on the fender and his paper before him, I determined to run in for a minute, and see how she was.

'I shall not be more than half an hour,' I said, as I came into the drawing-room, shawled and ready.

'You had better take Henry, my dear; it is past nine o'clock,' said my husband. But I wouldn't have a servant, as it was but a step; and I sallied forth into the winter's night alone.

As I entered the green lane, at the bottom of which stood the Carltons' house, to my surprise I saw a fly standing there. I had not ceased conjecturing for whom it could be waiting, when a man brushed hastily by me, and even in the darkness, I felt sure I recognised Captain Trenham's tall figure; but Captain Trenham was on leave I knew. He had left that morning by an early train, for George had told me so, and I smiled at my own excited imagination. Still, hardly knowing why, I quickened my footsteps anxiously, and without knocking, turned the handle of the door, and stood in the Carltons' drawing-room. It was empty, and a lamp burned dimly on the table. The place looked deserted and forlorn, and I called eagerly for Mabel. She did not answer; but fancying I heard a movement above, I ran hastily up to her room.

Was the figure that I saw there Mabel's?

She was sitting, with her bonnet and shawl on, on the foot of her bed, a small travelling-bag in her hand, her face white and drawn, dark circles under her haggard eyes—a wreck of the woman I had parted from the day before. As by a revelation, I knew it *all*! It was Captain Trenham I had

seen, and he had come back—for this. No! never while I had life. I flew to Mabel; I clasped her in my arms; I poured forth every endearing epithet I could think of. I told her, as I rained warm kisses and hot tears on her cheek, that I had come to save her, that I would save her; that, never, while I had strength to hold her, should she do this wickedness and 'sin against God.' I pillowed her head on my breast, and rocked her in my arms like a child, but she neither moved nor spoke. A marble statue would have been as full of life. What *could* I do to rouse her? And, while I sat there holding her in my arms, if any one should recognise Captain Trenham as I had done, her reputation would be lost for ever.

'Mabel, Mabel! speak to me,' I implored. I might as well have implored the dead to rise from their graves. I knew I must act, and that promptly; so laying her on her bed, and taking the precaution to lock the door for fear of prying servants, I went out again into the darkness, to find the would-be destroyer of my poor sweet Mabel.

As I stepped from the door, a figure emerged from the gloom, with a low cry of 'Mabel' on its lips. I laid my hand on its arm. 'Captain Trenham,' I said, 'I have been sent to prevent the crime you were about to commit; the very thought of which has nearly killed Mabel Carlton. Go, and thank Heaven on your knees, which has saved you and her this night. Go,' I repeated; 'it is well for you if you are not her murderer.'

'Is she ill? Have mercy, and tell me if she is ill. I will go away and never trouble her more, but tell me I have not killed her!' he said, humbly. 'Ah! you do not know our story.'

'I do,' I replied; 'but because her heart is broken would you destroy her soul?' And leaving him in the darkness, I returned to Mabel. She still lay motionless on her bed; so, undressing her, and removing all evidences of her intended flight, I called the servants, intending to send for medical assistance; but before I could do so, a shuddering sigh convulsed her whole frame, and large tears began to well out of her eyes. I knew then that the poor, overcharged brain was relieved, and her reason safe. But it was an anxious night for me; for she fell from one death-like faint into another, and when the doctor came he looked grave and concerned. I telegraphed for Colonel Carlton, and he returned to find his wife unconscious of his presence, and fighting with the grim destroyer, but youth and a naturally good constitution prevailed; and a day came when Mabel, the shadow of her former self, was lifted from the bed (which, for days, I had thought she would never leave again), and carried to the sofa in her pretty sitting-room.

The usually stern Colonel was visibly affected as he bent over the white wan face, which was as colourless as the pillows on which it rested; and I knew there were tears in his eyes, as he stooped to arrange and re-arrange the cushions, with almost the tenderness of a woman.

'You are very good to me,' said Mabel, faintly; 'I am not worthy of your goodness.'

I stepped hastily forward, fearing any agitating topic for her in her weak condition; but Colonel Carlton had left the room hastily to conceal an emotion of which he was half ashamed.

During Mabel's illness Captain Trenham suddenly exchanged back

into his old regiment, much to every one's astonishment and regret, except mine. I had seen him once. I had not the heart to refuse when he came to my house, and sent in a note entreating me to give him news of Mabel; and when I saw how he suffered, pity mingled with my indignation; but I made him promise that, should she recover, which we then doubted, he would never again attempt to see her; and he kept his word faithfully. In this world they never met again.

I took her away with me into the country, and nursed her back to health; but peace to her mind I could not restore. We never alluded to that dreadful night but once, and then, kneeling on her knees in utter self-abasement, she thanked and blessed me for having been the means of saving her; but I could see that she brooded over it continually. She shrank from seeing any one, saying always that she was unworthy even to touch the hem of a good woman's garment. I was pained, though not surprised, to see that as the time approached for us to return home she shrank more and more from meeting her husband. I reasoned with her, I comforted her; I reminded her who it was that forbid us to cast stones at each other, and on what occasion the command was given. I spoke of repentance, of atonement, without which repentance is nought; and I promised her peace. But it was long ere the peace came. Mabel repented deeply, bitterly, and silently; and she did seek with all her strength to atone for that momentary madness. Though she shrank morbidly from society, she became almost a sister of mercy to the women of the regiment; and was always most pitiful and tender to such of her erring sisters as had strayed from the paths of virtue.

There was the soul of one of the martyrs of old in that fragile form; and where pestilence raged, where crime stalked rampant, there, soothing, comforting, admonishing, was she ever to be found. I remonstrated once when I found her braving what I considered unnecessary danger, but she stopped me sadly; 'Have I not to atone?' said she.

And at length, God sent the Comforter! There came a day when Mabel lay faint and exhausted in her bed, but with a new light of happiness in her eyes, and a tiny form beside her. 'God has forgiven me,' she whispered, as I bent over her, 'since He has sent me a little soul to train for Him.'

Years have rolled by since then, and Mabel Carlton is still pursuing her work of atonement; but never since the day when wee Mary first lay in her arms has she sorrowed as those who have no hope. Her life is spent in works of love and charity; and to husband and child she is the very light of the eyes; and when her place on earth shall know her no more, her good works shall live after her.

There is a lonely graveyard in Port's Island, Bermuda, washed ever by the surging sea, where lie the remains of those who died by yellow fever in the frightful epidemic of 186—. If you push aside the tangled brushwood and cedar, and the rank tropical weeds which grow over the neglected graves, you will see one bearing this inscription:—

SACRED TO THE MEMORY
OF
CHARLES TRENHAM,
Captain —th Regiment,

WHO SACRIFICED HIS LIFE NOBLY WHILE
ATTENDING ON THE MEN OF HIS REGIMENT
DURING THE YELLOW-FEVER EPIDEMIC.

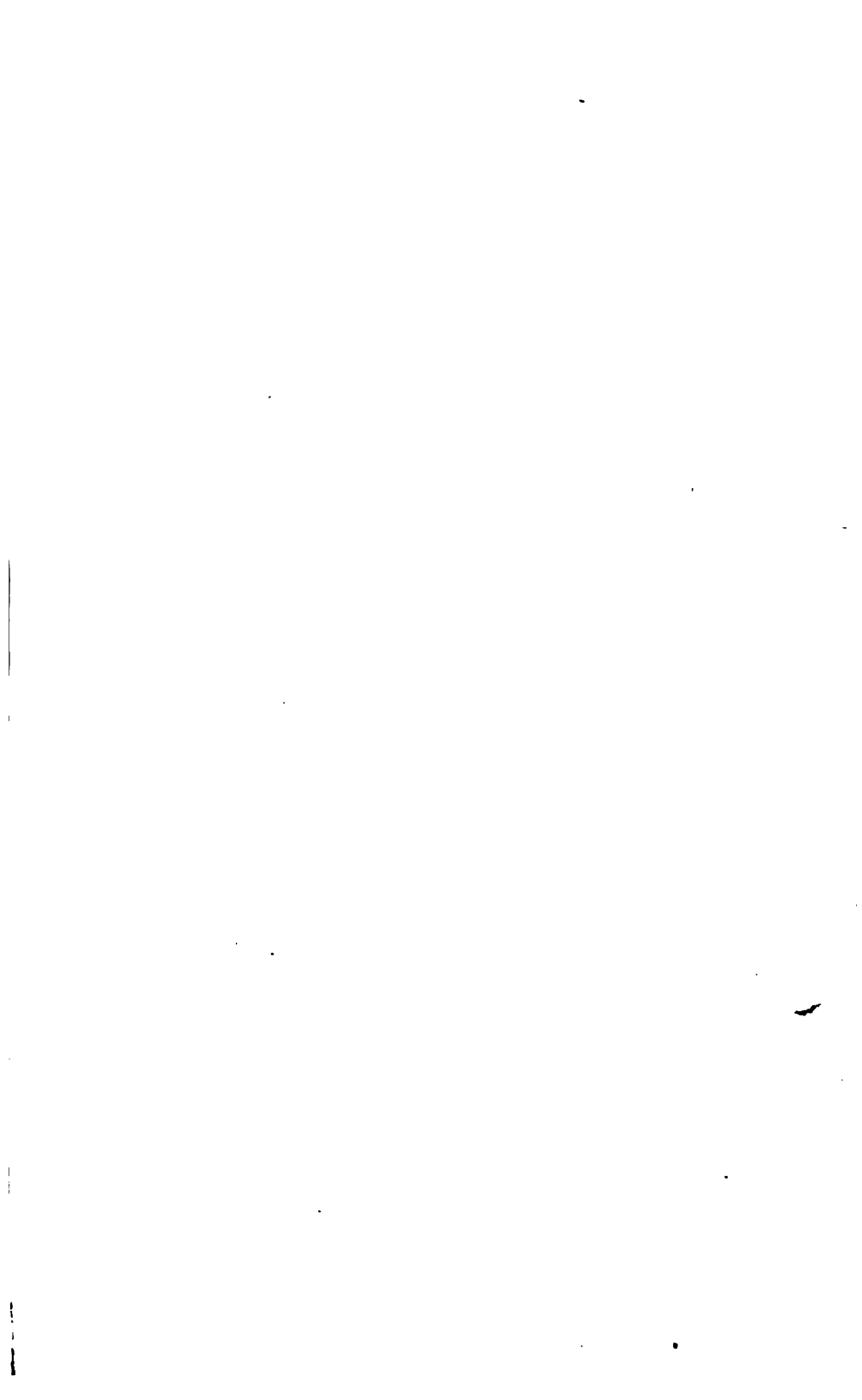
'He who is without sin among you let him cast the first stone.'

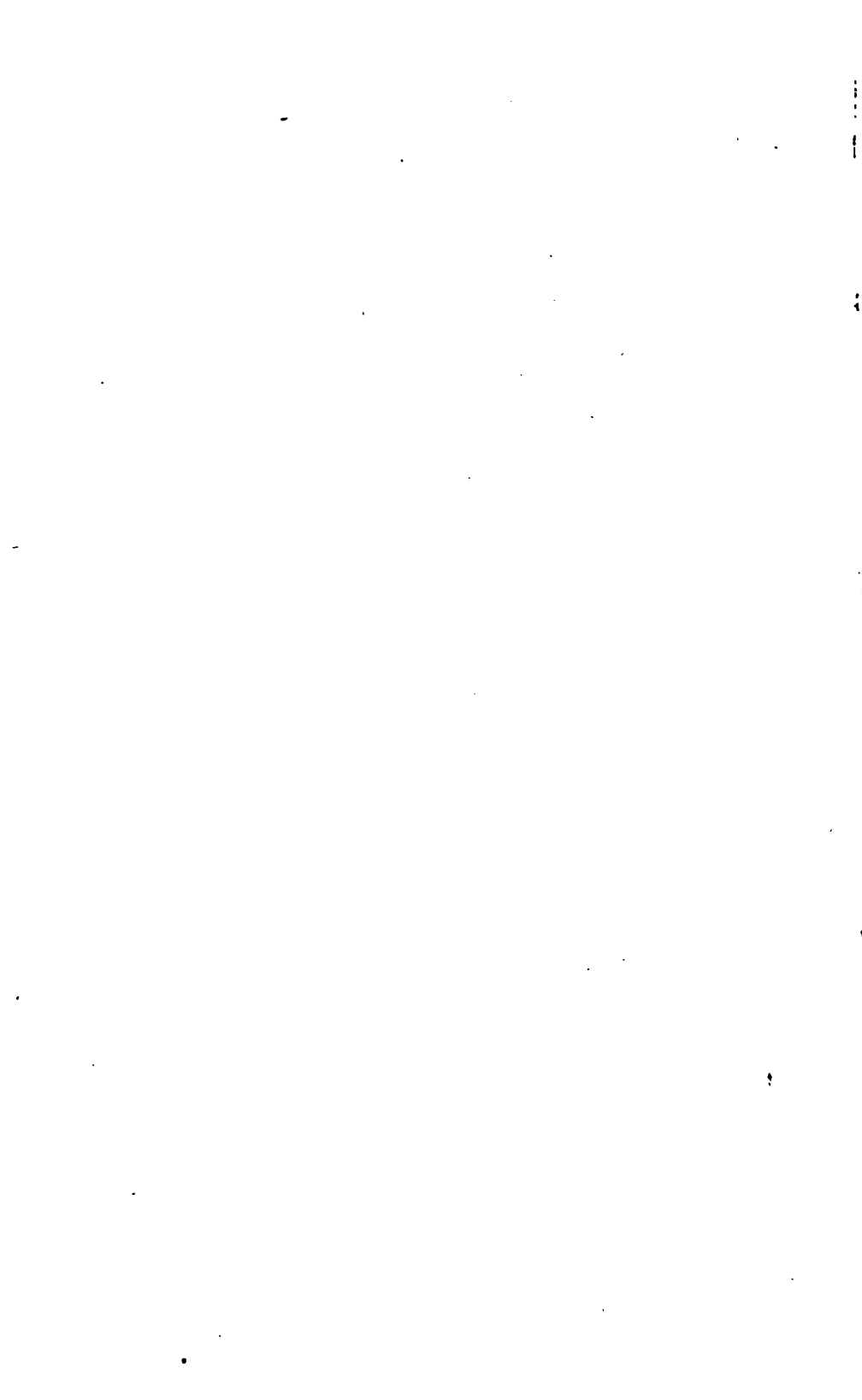
E. M.



by C. O. Murray.]

THE FATAL LETTER.





THE FATAL LETTER.

IT was only a girlish freak. She had a mind to try his heart. If she could make the noble Percy jealous, surely that were to put his love unto the quickest test.

How should she know that the time was ill chosen? They had not told her the foe was almost at the gate. Time out of mind, she had heard of the enemy who would one day come and challenge them to the combat. But use is second nature. She had grown up among alarms of war and record of knightly deeds.

'No, thou shalt not see it, cousin Percy. I tell thee the letter is for me alone to read, and thou mayst not see how or why 'tis writ.'

There was Yes and No in her eye. No means Yes as often as it means No in woman's mouth and eyes. But Lord Percy was a man of earnest mind and impulse. He had no practice in reading hearts like Lady Katharine's. He weighed her words, and not her looks; he had no skill of badinage; his soul was truth itself; but he should not thus have played the part of lover with Katharine. To-day, moreover, he was less than ever in mood for jests and frivolous words. He longed for the maiden's love, for gentle speech and sympathetic looks. She gave him glances arch and coy, and jests, and Yea and Nay; and these jarred upon Lord Percy's serious knowledge of the times. But my Lady Katharine seemed not made for sober joys and deep heart-plighted troth. Her young life had taken the gayest colour of the time, leaving the sombre tints to sadder natures. As yet she had lived in the sun, and knew nothing of the sad delights of the shadow.

'If thou art jealous of this poor

letter because thou mayst not see it, then, Lord Percy, get thee gone. I am used to be trusted, and I take it ill of thee to do me wrong with thy jealous fears.'

He had come to say farewell; he had come to kneel at her feet, to take her hand, to ask her when they should be wed; to tell her that, when she saw him go forth to meet the foe, she might know he would be safe to conquer, because he wore her likeness in his heart, and her glove in his plumed casque. He came to look into her eyes, and say tender things and sad. He came to sue for the solace of her outspoken love, to bask in the true woman's smile, to be assured that he had some one to fight for, to die for, if need be, and to carry with him to the field her sweet looks, the memory of her last dear words.

But how should she have known all this? Why are not men always frank and true of speech? Why do they not open their hearts freely, and take the risk of results? Because they are vain and proud, foolishly susceptible to ridicule, and lack the courage to meet disappointment.

Had Lord Percy told her all, Katharine, startled into naturalness at his earnest words, had laid her hand in his, and trusted him with all her true heart's secret.

She chose to make a mystery of that foolish letter, albeit 'twas but a fond epistle from her brother; but in those long past days of English history to receive a letter was a great event. Moreover, Lord Percy remembered a strange knight riding out across the drawbridge three months before, and kissing his hand in the moonlight to the window of Lady Katharine's chamber. But what of that, my Lord?

True love should hold the mistress of its heart above suspicion. It was only now, in presence of that averted letter, that Lord Percy thought of the strange guest of half an hour, who came to deliver despatches to the garrison.

'Then 'tis like you love another,' he said with rueful voice—'that strange knight, perchance, and 'tis he hath sent my Lady that favoured letter.'

'Tis like, if thou shalt think so—like enough, my Lord,' the maiden answered, nothing loth to fan the flame. 'I say not so; but thou art brave and wise, and knowest many things.'

'You answer tauntingly, methinks, when I do but speak from the love I bear thee, sweet Kate,' he said.

'I am no longer sweet Kate to thee, Percy, if thou doubttest me, and can even remember that strange knight, whom I never saw, against me.'

She looked up with an acted indifference which Lord Percy could not discern, he was so intent upon her words and his own desires.

'Nay, show me that letter, then, my cousin, and let me know my fate at once. I pine and chafe against these bars of doubt, and I have much that I would say to thee.'

'I tell thee, Percy, thou mayst not see the letter; and if thou wilt make bars to chafe against, thou art thine own prisoner.'

'Kate, you trifle with me—you have a secret.'

'I have, my Lord; and wouldst thou knew it, then wouldst thou be sorry for thy cruel words.'

She was getting angry with herself and him, and longed to see him at her feet, that she might show him her brother's letter, and all be well again. But Lord Percy had never loved before, and knew not, nor guessed the maiden's arts and wiles.

'I would die rather than say cruel words to thee, Kate; but I would not have tortured thee as thou hast tortured me for all the treasures of Egypt and Peru. Thou art fickle and untrue, and would take back the promises which I once read in thine eyes and in thy choice of companionship.'

'Fickle, my Lord!—untrue! Are these the words thou dost select to pelt thy love withal? Nay, then, the Lady Katharine has well escaped such mating as thou wouldst offer her. Farewell, cousin Percy; and when next thou comest to woo, bring softer words and more discerning eyes, and better knowledge of a maiden's heart than thou hast discovered here to-day.'

He went his way, the proud Lord Percy, and the tender words remained unsaid. When he was gone my Lady sighed and wept, and tore up her brother's letter into fragments, and scattered them in the air from her window. She watched them floating on the wind like summer butterflies.

On the morrow the foe, whose tardy operations had made his presence in the land almost disregarded, showed his angry front, and summoned the royal garrison to battle. There was clash of drums and trumpets, and neighing of restless steeds. The sun shone out on glittering swords, and silken banners, and men in flashing steel.

Lord Percy sallied forth with his mail-clad warriors. He had not sought the Lady Katharine again. The bustle of sudden preparation had held him prisoner to details of arrangement. She had sent once to bid him remember his cousin in this hour of danger, to wish him godspeed; but for Lord Percy the bout of love was over. He had put on the soldier now, and laid aside the silken hose and rosetted shoon. His voice rung out the well-known commands—his gallant

knights responded with the Percy battle-cry—his plume waved foremost in the van. Thinking of this on yesternight, he would fain have carried some simple talisman against the foeman's spear, some guerdon of his love, a ribbon, a glove, to wear in his helmet's plume—some token of his heart's desire. But now he sallied forth with only the Percy colours, the Percy arms, unsoftened by woman's gentle gift at parting.

* * * *

When his men came home victorious, with spoils of battle and prisoners of note, they brought their leader on a warlike bier, and laid him down where his cousin and all the castle's inmates, men and women, might see how death had quenched the light of his noble face.

And then my Lady Katharine learnt the bitter lesson of her life. Her heart stood still, until they

feared she were dead also; but she awakened to her grief all pale and sad, and then they guessed her secret, and tended her night and day.

Lord Percy's mother came likewise, and, touched by the maiden's grief, she took her for a daughter, to fill the vacant place in her widowed heart.

Lady Katharine lived a pious, gentle life, that might, under another fortune, have been a life of love and household pride—a life of woman's happiness, with children to console and bless. But fate had willed it otherwise, and she bowed her head as one who merited all the sorrow that had fallen upon her young and blighted years.

So oftentimes it happens, in course of love and friendship, the hasty word, the cruel thought, only shadowed forth in jest, come back to blister the fairest lips and break the truest heart.

JOSEPH HATTON.



SWEETHEARTS.

WHITE flower at beginning,
 Black fruit of grief or sinning,
 Red stain for each one winning
 The thorny crown of love ;
 And 'sweetheart' called most truly,
 Because thou clingest duly
 To her who cometh newly
 Within the haunted grove.

All in the bright June weather,
 My dear and I together
 We trampled through the heather,
 Just twelve short months ago ;
 But now I go in trouble
 That each new day doth double ;
 The seed we sowed to stubble
 Has turned—no grain would grow !

Alas, that love's white flower
 Should wither ere it tower !
 That white love should have power
 To bring forth blackest fruit !
 That fruit of love should stain us
 Like blood, though we refrain us
 From weeping, that we gain us
 But thorns from pleasure's root !

Corn cometh not to reaping,
 Our laughter ends in weeping,
 And, lo, the bramble, creeping
 My weary steps about,
 Mocks me with 'sweetheart's' naming,
 And clings about me, claiming
 My notice, as 'twere shaming
 His faith who made me doubt.

B. MONTGOMERIE RANKING.

SPA IN 1873.

'POUR quel endroit, monsieur?' inquired the distributor of tickets at the Northern Railway in Paris, one evening in August 1873.

'Pour Spa,' was my reply.

'Monsieur will take a ticket to Liège; monsieur will wait there two hours, when another train will convey him to Spa.'

'Très-bien,' said I, thinking it was, on the contrary, *très-mal*.

However, a few minutes more found me ensconced in a corner of a roomy but low first-class carriage, with two companions, all three of us smoking away like lime-kilns.

By-the-way, since the war it has become next to impossible to procure a decent cigar in Paris. There used to be a *dépôt* of Havannahs adjoining the Grand Hôtel, but last year I looked for it in vain, and was compelled to have recourse to the tender mercies of the *régie*, in the shape of a very persuasive lady in the Rue Drouot (an old acquaintance of mine, and ex-actress of several *vaudeville* theatres), by whom I was supplied with a packet of anomalous and misshapen compositions called Londres, each with a knot in the middle, and whose aroma reminded me of the flavour so feelingly described by the *gent* in the 'Man in the Moon'; 'If it were only cabbage-leaves, or lettuce-leaves, one could get through one's cigar; but, blank it, it's too bad to make them of leeks and onions!'

Scarcely was the train in motion, when one of my fellow-travellers, a stout Rhinelander from Bonn (as his hand-bag, whereon his name, address, and 'Zum Andenken' were embroidered in yellow letters on a black ground, sufficiently testified), having finished

the cigarette he had been smoking, extracted from an apparently unfathomable pocket a huge china pipe, ornamented with a view of the Drachenfels, and proceeded to fill it with some of that choice tobacco which grows between Heidelberg and Mannheim. His colloquial powers being rather of a monosyllabic character, I bethought myself of my opposite neighbour, when a tremendous snore from that quarter dispelled any idea I might have had of beguiling the journey with conversation. I therefore did what was natural under the circumstances—I fell asleep, and never awoke until we reached the Belgian frontier, where we were all unceremoniously told to turn out for the *douane*.

A few brief questions and answers in one room, and a cup of *bouillon* in another, soon ended this little *intermezzo*; the train went on, and the passengers went off to sleep again as if nothing had happened; and before I was thoroughly conscious of the change in my position, I found myself and luggage deposited on the platform of the station at Liège, the clock striking five, the train on its way to Cologne, and not a living soul near me. 'A decided case of quarter-deck,' thought I, and commenced pacing up and down the platform. Presently a nondescript individual in his shirt-sleeves appeared at a door, over which was inscribed 'Le public n'entre pas ici,' but disappeared again before I could accost him. However, he shortly afterwards emerged from his den in full official costume, with a very smart gold band round his cap. Rightly judging him to be an inspector, I politely asked him when the waiting-room would be open. He looked at me stolidly,

took out his watch, compared it with the station clock, and at last replied to my question with another.

'Vous voulez du café?'

As I *did* want coffee, I assented, and inquired how soon I had a chance of getting it.

'Dans une petite demi-heure, savez-vous,' said he; whereupon he rapped at the closed door of the *salle d'attente* and shouted 'Pierre!' Soon after, the sound of a broom knocking about the furniture of the room in question announced that Pierre was at work.

The short half-hour turned out to be a remarkably long hour, for it was nearly a quarter to seven when the door opened, and a very small boy with a very shrill voice thus accosted me and a priest, who had just arrived with a breviary under his arm: 'Le café est prêt, *savez-vous*!'

Ten minutes later, I was seated in the train; and the guard, after examining my ticket, left me with a parting admonition: 'Vous descendrez à Pepinster, *savez-vous*!'

The railway from Liège to Pepinster, and from thence to Spa, passes though, perhaps, the prettiest part of all Belgium. Wooded hills, meadows of the brightest and most luxuriant green, with here and there a village spire or an occasional *château*, meet the eye in rapid succession on either side; and after each of the innumerable tunnels through which we glide, we are enchanted by some new variety of landscape beauty. Seen on a lovely August morning, the rich masses of purple heath and the waving cornfields gilded by the sunlight, it was indeed a charming panorama, and I almost regretted when the train finally stopped, and a dear, familiar voice bade me welcome to Spa.

Though my earliest recollections of this attractive spot date as far back as 1837, I had frequently revisited it, but not for the last sixteen years; I was therefore curious to see what changes time had worked in the little valley endeared to me by many an old association. These changes, I am happy to say, were few, and those few decided improvements, mainly comprising a handsome bath establishment, a new street or two, and divers hotels and country houses, chiefly in the direction of the Allée du Marteau. But the Pouhon was still bubbling at the end of the Rue Royale; the old church beside it still rang out its chimes as of yore; nay, even the Redoute was still there, but metamorphosed into Casino. I remember, many years ago, questioning one of the natives as to the origin of the name it then bore, and suggesting that it might be derived from the Italian *ridotto*. 'Non, monsieur,' replied he, 'ce n'est pas ça. Ça doit s'appeler Redoute, monsieur, parce que c'est un endroit redoutable . . . pour les joueurs.'

I must confess I thought his definition even more applicable than my own.

When I arrived, the season was at its height; the hotels were doing a thriving business, and every available apartment had been long since taken. Comfortable quarters had been secured for me in a snug little house on the Place Royale, from the windows of which I could, if lazily inclined, hear the music and see the promenaders without stirring from my arm-chair. For the Place Royale is the principal—I may say the only rendezvous for visitors of high or low degree. It has its small *kiosque* for newspapers, and its larger one for the musicians,

who play there (weather permitting) every evening, ball nights excepted: the afternoon concerts, varied occasionally by *bals d'enfants*, take place in the adjoining Allée de Sept Heures.

I ought to lay particular stress on the words 'weather permitting,' for nowhere does the rise or fall of the barometer exercise a more direct influence than at Spa. As long as the sun shines, and the hills (which the natives *will* call mountains) are without a trace of mist or foggy vapour, no place can be more enjoyable; but at the very first symptom of what Mrs. Brandyball terms 'cadent humidity in the circumambient atmosphere,' you may safely make up your mind either to a regular downpour of four-and-twenty hours, or what is worse, to a perpetual drizzle, suggesting the most melancholy reflections, and ultimately (for human patience has its limits) terminating in a despairing rush to the railway station. For the social resources of Spa, during this forced suspension of out-door recreations, are of a very mild and primitive character: the Casino is by no means so lively a resort as when presided over by M. Davelouis and his myrmidons; and the futile attempts of the management to organise whist or *écarté* tables prove but little in favour of the mutual confidence presumed to exist among the frequenters of the establishment. There is a theatre, supported last year by a very good working company; the prominent figure being a certain Malard, a young comic actor whose name I expect to see on some Parisian *affiche* before long; there are also balls twice a week, presenting what Mr. Bantam would call an 'amalgamation to say the least remarkable,' *et voilà tout*.

However, as it does not *always*

rain at Spa, it is as well to look at the bright side of the question, and enjoy ourselves while we can. And where could we hope to find more ample materials for enjoyment than in this 'happy valley,' compared to which that of Rasselas was a mere sham? Always supposing that, like *Jenny l'Ouvrière*, we are blessed with a '*cœur content, content de peu*,' and that the waters—if we take them—do not disagree with us. The said waters (be it parenthetically remarked), especially those of the Pouhon, are a real godsend to the visitors, not only on account of their healing properties, but because they furnish a delightful pretext for meeting one's friends and acquaintances at stated hours, thereby occasioning an amount of chit-chat and a mutual examination of bonnets highly congenial to the female mind. Four o'clock in the afternoon is the fashionable hour at the Pouhon, and there the dear creatures sip, walk up and down, and sip again, until it is time to think of dressing for the five-o'clock dinner.

For we keep early hours at Spa; we revel in the prevailing Arcadian simplicity, and take our seats at the well-stocked board of the Flandre or the Orange as naturally and with as keen an appetite as if 'half-past eight for nine' were Sanskrit or Ashantee to us. By-the-way, Sheridan's comparison of Miss Ogle's face to a Spa *table-d'hôte*, 'where no two guests are of a nation,' will hardly hold good at the present day, for every second person you meet there is a Belgian. Belgians from Liège, Belgians from Verviers, Belgians from Brussels, mingled with a sprinkling of Americans, a few French, here and there, perhaps, a stray German, and the usual allowance of Smiths, Browns, Joneses and Robinsons; the native

element, however, so strongly predominating that, on rising from table, you find yourself mechanically saying, 'Si nous prenions du café, *savez-vous* !'

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During many years of his life, the illustrious composer Meyerbeer was in the habit of passing his summers at Spa; and I can remember having frequently seen him on his traditional donkey, with a huge umbrella over his head, starting for his daily ride in the Allée du Marteau. His attachment to the locality has not been forgotten nor unrecognised by the inhabitants; a charming and picturesque promenade has been artistically laid out between the springs of the Géronstère and the Barisart, and named after him; and this memorial having been projected and completed since my last visit to Spa, I set out one morning, accompanied by a young friend, ardent admirer of the *maestro*, for the purpose of exploring it.

Leaving the town by the road leading to the Sauvenière, and diverging soon after to the right, we found ourselves in a pretty lane, which, after sundry windings, between cornfields and commons covered with heath blossoms, brought us to a rustic bridge spanning a shallow rivulet. This is the entrance to the so-called 'Promenade des Artistes,' a path ingeniously cut through the woods, abounding in miniature rocks, streamlets and waterfalls, and finally terminating in the immediate neighbourhood of the Géronstère.

At this, my favourite of all the springs, on account of its fine old trees and lovely situation, we determined on a halt and a bottle of Bass. Questioning the proprietor of the *restaurant* (who bore the euphonious name of Sody), as to

the commercial success of his enterprise, he pulled a very long face, and said that things could not well be worse. 'Why,' said I, 'how can that be, with the town so full of visitors?' 'Ah, monsieur,' replied he, with a sigh, 'they do me no good: if they come here at all, they only ask for a glass of water from the spring. Non, monsieur, depuis que la banque est fermée, la cavalerie légère ne vient plus!'

'What do you mean by "la cavalerie légère"?''

'Ces petites dames, monsieur sait très-bien. Ça venait tous les jours, ça voulait toujours des primeurs, ça buvait du champagne, c'était le bon temps enfin! Mais aujourd'hui, voilà les affaires que je fais!' added he, pointing contemptuously to a party regaling themselves below with the crystal element of the *source*.

'Well,' said my companion, as we rose to depart, 'the lessee of the spring seems out of sorts, and no wonder. What can he have to live on?'

'Sody-water,' was my atrocious reply.

* * * * *

The Promenade de Meyerbeer, which immediately adjoins the gardens of the Géronstère, is arranged very much in the style of the Promenade des Artistes, but with more pretension to scenic effect; its most picturesque localities being designated by titles borrowed from 'Les Huguenots,' 'Dinorah,' 'Le Prophète,' and 'L'Étoile du Nord.' For instance, a tiny waterfall like a silver thread is called 'La Cascade de Ploërmel'; a flight of steps, composed of roughly hewn stones, represents 'L'Escalier du Prophète'; a wooden bridge is dignified by the name of 'Le Pont de Marcel,' and two recesses, where benches are placed for the accommodation of visitors,

are respectively denominated 'Le Repos de Pierre et Catherine' and 'Le Repos de Raoul.' My young friend was in an ecstasy of delight, and nothing would satisfy him until he had enlivened the *mise en scène* with appropriate airs selected from the different operas, which he trolled forth with irrepressible enthusiasm, until a gleam of sunshine through the trees warned us we were entering the grounds attached to the Barisart. Half an hour later, as poor Arnal would have said, 'la Place Royale s'arrêta devant nous !'

* * * * *

Spa is a favourite resort of the Queen of the Belgians, and I had frequent opportunities of seeing her Majesty as well as the King during my stay there. I must say, the quiet yet cordial respect shown them by the inhabitants contrasted favourably with the 'mobbing' propensities we are apt to witness at home; the royal couple, too, appeared to enjoy the entire freedom from conventional restraint, and walked, shopped, or mingled with the other visitors on the promenade without the slightest encroachment being made on their privacy.

One day, while I was choosing some cigars at Henrard's he related to me a little incident, which happened shortly before my arrival. The Queen, who is constantly in the habit of visiting the environs in a pony phaeton driven by herself, had started on an excursion one afternoon, accompanied by a lady-in-waiting and a single servant; when at a considerable distance from Spa, the party were overtaken by a violent thunderstorm, and, to crown their misfortune, had lost their way. After many fruitless attempts to regain the right road, they discerned in the distance the lights of a village, and finally arrived there

late in the evening, and wet to the skin. One of the houses appearing to them more likely from its size to afford them accommodation than the rest, they proceeded thither, and requested admission and shelter until the storm had passed over. The proprietor, burgomaster, as it chanced, of the locality, received their application with a surly refusal, and, without even listening to the remonstrances of the lady-in-waiting (the spokeswoman of the party), coolly shut the door in their faces.

They were more successful at a neighbouring farm-house, the owners of which not only cheerfully welcomed their unexpected and unknown guests, but eagerly ransacked their wardrobes, as a temporary substitute for the dripping garments of the ladies. On the return of the servant, who had been despatched to Spa for a carriage and a change of *toilette*, the Queen, without betraying her incognito, bade her kind entertainers good-night, and thanked them warmly for their hospitality. On the following day a handsome present was forwarded to the worthy couple, who had then for the first time the satisfaction of knowing the name and quality of their distinguished visitor; and at the same time the burgomaster received his dismissal from office, not on account of his having refused admission to his sovereign, but because it was his duty to have accorded it to the meanest of her subjects.

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A very pleasant *lieu de réunion* is the Place Royale on a fine August evening during the instrumental concert. Rows of chairs, extending to the Allée de Sept Heures, are occupied by a motley assemblage of visitors and inhabitants, while the entire adjoining

space is thronged with loungers of every description, interspersed with gaily-dressed children intent on play, or flitting about to the inspiring sounds of the orchestra. One evening I particularly remember; the weather was exceptionally fine, and the selection of the music especially good; a bird's-eye view of it may not perhaps be displeasing to the reader.

It is now about half-past seven, the *entr'acte* between the first and second parts of the concert is just ending, and the musicians are tuning their instruments before striking up Suppé's overture to 'Poète et Paysan.' A fire balloon has just been despatched in the direction of Pepinster by an adventurous man in a *blouse*, to the intense delight of the children; and my young friend whispers to me in exulting confidence that one of the concluding *morceaux* of the programme is to be a grand selection from the 'Huguenots.' Groups of friends and acquaintances sit or walk together; the men are enjoying their cigars, and the ladies their social chat. A small Russian with a big dog—both popular characters—pass by on their way to the Allée du Maréchal; a pretty little Englishwoman is reading a Tauchnitz novel in one corner, and an unwieldy Belgian in another, who has just absorbed his second glass of an indigenous mixture called *lambic*, is relating to an admiring circle his exploits at croquet; which game, by-the-way, is played at Spa on a very uneven surface, without a blade of grass on it, at the bottom of the Sept Heures walk.

Here, a roving compatriot is distributing *sous* for a scramble among a crowd of barefooted ragamuffins; there, we remark a charming sisterly group, as familiar to our own *salons* as to those

of the Faubourg St. Germain; on our right we recognise the graceful and talented authoress of 'Misunderstood,' and on our left the good-humoured-looking Mr. Justice Rhadamanthus, accompanied by his wife and pretty daughter, and, doubtless, congratulating himself on his exemption from the Tichborne case and Dr. Kenealy's badgering.

Hark! the 'Huguenots' are beginning; my youthful enthusiast is in a fever of rapture, and every now and then imposes silence on his neighbours by an indignant *chut!* the stout little Frenchman, proprietor of the adjoining *brasserie*, leaves his customers to the care of the waiter, and thrusts his head forward 'pour mieux écouter,' as the wolf said to Red Riding-hood; the musicians vie with each other in precision and *brío*; the lady part of the audience, contrary to all established usage, actually listen to them; while my young friend is in the seventh heaven, and only descends from it to scowl wrathfully on a couple of unorthodox children, who are positively improvising a polka to the air of the 'Bénédiction des Poignards'!

* * * * *

Although our everyday life was, perhaps, inclined to verge on the monotonous, yet occasional spurts of excitement were not wanting. One of these was the announcement of steeplechases, to be contested only by the *bidets de Spa*—the same hardy, sure-footed little nags whose speed and powers of endurance are so universally appreciated by excursionists. The originators of this scheme were M. Roussille, a rich Brussels banker, and his good-looking wife, by whom the amount of the different prizes was liberally offered; M. Roussille, as a fair division of labour, undertaking to furnish the

money, and madame to distribute it to the winners.

The locality chosen was the hippodrome of Sart, about a mile and a half from the town; and on the appointed day (luckily, a fine one) every carriage and saddle-horse in Spa might be seen wending their way up the hilly road leading to the course. As walking always suits me best, I clambered up the path skirting the then deserted *café* of 'Annette et Lubin,' where a dilapidated waiter was feebly essaying his skill at the *tir au pistolet*, and after a pleasant ramble through as pretty a lane as I had ever seen out of England, I finally arrived at the scene of action. Although long past the hour at which the first race ought to have been run, there were no signs indicating a commencement of proceedings; and I had time leisurely to mount the hill, on which a few rows of seats and a tent surmounted by a flag had been hastily erected, before the bell rang for saddling. The price of admission to the reserved seats, in front of which an *estrade d'honneur* had been placed for Monsieur and Madame Roussille and their friends, was only two francs; but, with the exception of a few acquaintances of my own and certain of the townspeople (who, I suspect, got in for nothing), they were very thinly patronised, the majority of the spectators preferring the exciting vicinity of the 'jumps,' and the even more attractive prospect of having nothing to pay.

At length a smart pony phaeton drove up, and out stepped Madame Roussille, a most elegant primrose-gloved charioteer; when she had been duly installed in her place as judge, which office, the programme informed us, had been specially assigned to her, the second bell rang, and five horses started for race number one. Of

these, two fell at the third obstacle, which in the distance looked like a furze bush, and one bolted; the other two jockeys contrived to keep their saddles; and the second, somewhat irregularly attired in a blue jacket and black trousers, just managed to save his distance. Race number two was a trifle more exciting: six started, and of these only one fell at the river (about two yards wide), where a man with a long whip was posted, whose duty it was to administer a sharp cut to every animal as it passed, by way of jumping-powder: the distance, however (twice round), proved too much for three of them, and the remaining two had it all to themselves, and came in, with only a head between them, in fine style.

I am almost ashamed to say that race number three found me among the deserters; but I subsequently heard that the meeting was voted a complete success, and that, by order of the municipality, a grand serenade was given that evening by the local band before the windows of Madame Roussille.

'Palmarum quæ meruit ferat.'

* * * * *

From time immemorial every city in Belgium has had its *kermesse*, and last year the authorities of Spa decided on following the general example. Gigantic placards announced a three days' musical festival, gymnastic exercises, extraordinary theatrical representations by my old acquaintance Mdlle. Scriwaneck, open-air concerts, fabulous illuminations, dinners, balls, and speeches innumerable; and, for the *bouquet*, a grand 'Concours de Cramignons' on the Place Royale. Bravely spoken, *affiche*, and carried out more bravely still! For in not one iota did the execution fall short of the original

design. Herr Raff's symphony and Marie Cabel's *roulades*—not to mention other *solistes* and two hundred instrumentalists into the bargain—were attractions which no lover of festivals (even a three-days' one) could resist. Active youths in white jackets and ditto continuations rivalled each other in feats of agility; Mdlle. Scriverneck outdid herself as 'le Gamin de Paris'; musical societies from Liège and elsewhere drew crowded houses to the Sept Heures *kiosque*; many-coloured lamps glittered on every available tree and bush; and as for eating, drinking, and speechifying, I think I am not far wrong in affirming that the promises held out by the programme were most amply and conscientiously redeemed.

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But the crowning attraction of the *kermesse* was the 'Concours de Cramignons.' A communicative old gentleman, whose acquaintance I had casually made one evening at the French *brasserie* already alluded to, tried hard to explain to me the meaning of the word *cramignon*, but had evidently no very clear notions on the subject; and to this day I know not whether the term be applicable to the singers or to the airs they sing, though I suspect the latter to be the case. I ascertained, however, that the good city of Liège possesses some twenty or thirty vocal societies, each of which has its own peculiar costume and *répertoire* of old Flemish or Walloon melodies, to which fresh words are adapted *ad libitum*. On this occasion the subject-matter of each effusion was a complimentary tribute in praise of Spa; and on the appointed morning about a dozen deputations from the mother societies, the least considerable consisting of twelve and the largest of three hundred members, ranged

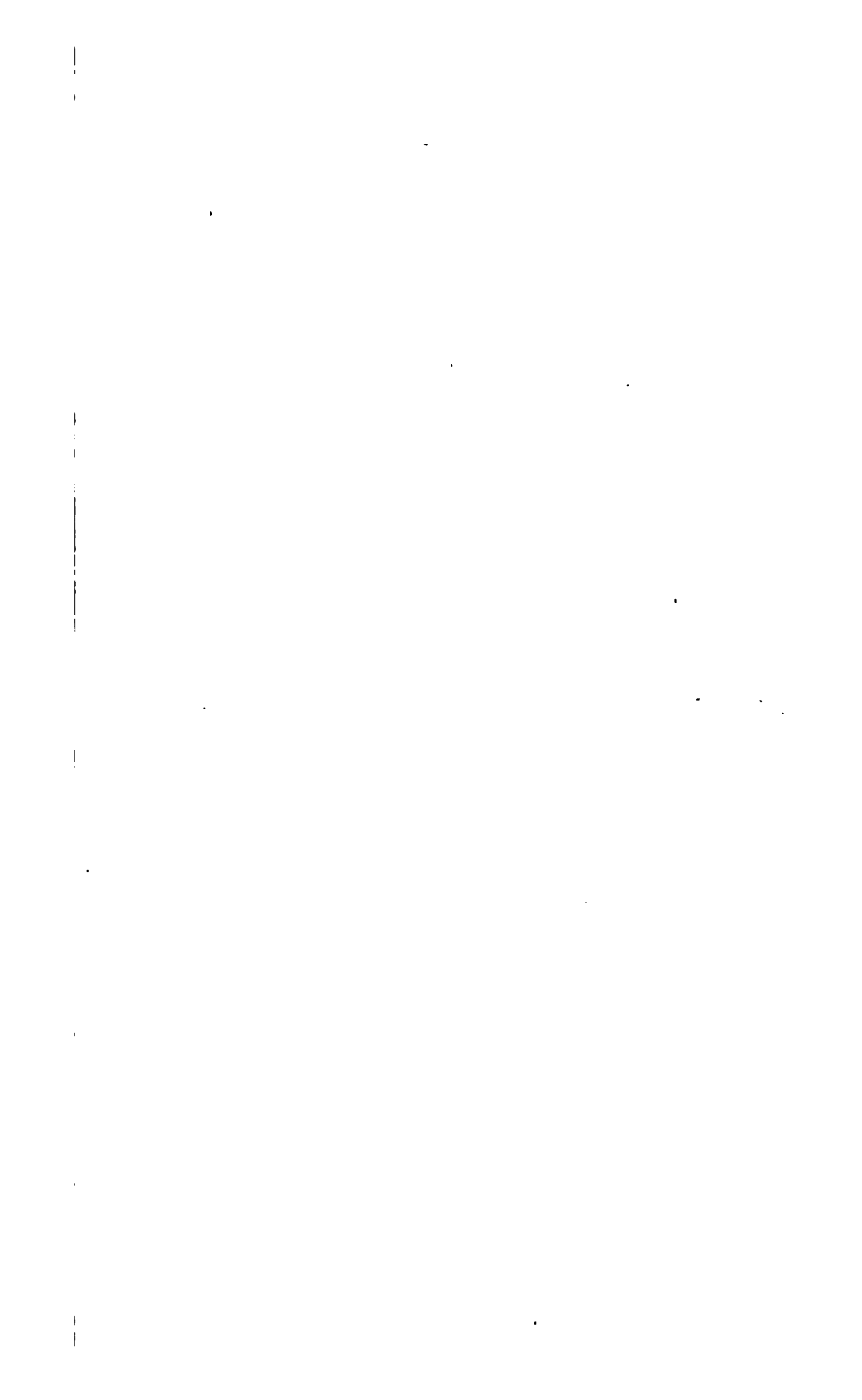
themselves before the *kiosque* of the Place Royale, wherein the burgomaster and other notables of the town were assembled to hear the different compositions and award the prizes.

The first candidates on the list were supposed to represent the agricultural interest: their costume was that of a stage peasant, and they wore in addition red woollen nightcaps and *sabots* adorned with wisps of straw. These were followed by a company of *incroyables*, in sky-blue coats and tights; succeeded by a nautical deputation in glazed hats and white trousers; then came a score or so of spick-span fashionables in full evening dress and straw-coloured gloves, who made way in their turn for the three hundred members of the largest society in Liège. These worthies began by forming an immense circle, which entirely surrounded the tribunal of the judges; they then commenced whirling round and round, crossing each other in all directions, but always hand in hand, and shouting out verse after verse of an interminable eulogy of Spa, the *refrain* of which was 'Vive le bon air! Vive le Pouhon!'

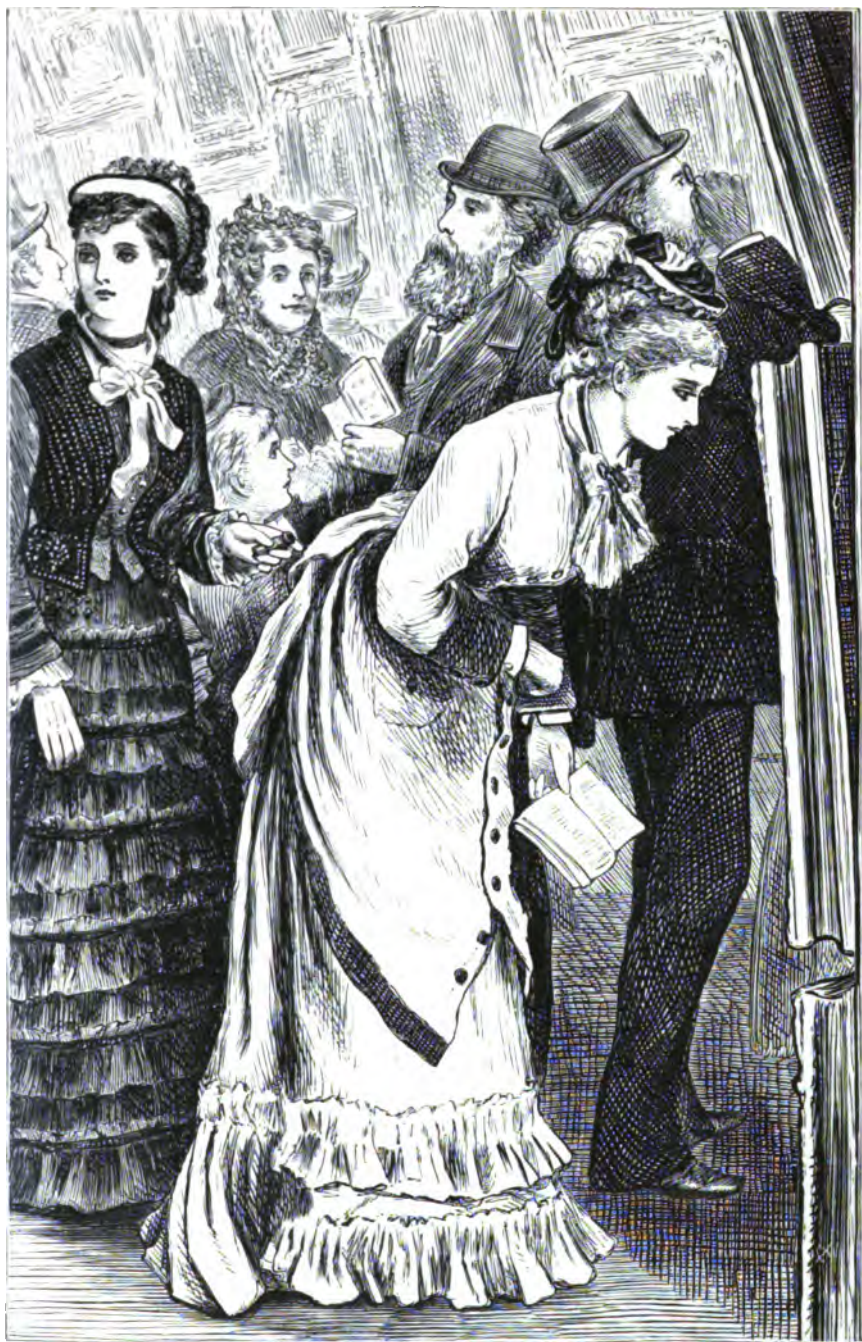
I was not sorry when the last deputation had retired, and the judges proceeded to distribute the honorary medals; the first of these was awarded to the three hundred, and the second (greatly to my delight) to the theatrical peasants, who threw up their nightcaps in ecstasy, and clattered about more uproariously than ever.

When all was over, I turned to my landlord, whom, by-the-way, I never saw without a pipe in his mouth, and asked him how long the affair had lasted.

'Monsieur,' said he, after consulting, not his watch, but his tobacco-pouch, 'ça a bien duré quatre pipes!' C. H.







Drawn by M. Kerns.]

AT THE ACADEMY.

FRENCH NOVELISTS.

XL—EDMOND ABOUT.

M ABOUT is a young man of some celebrity, though, so fine is the distinction of terms, it would be a trifle too high an honour for him to be called 'celebrated.' It may be unwise, too, as time slips so rapidly, to call him 'a young man,' and perhaps unfair as well, at this distance from Paris; since he himself, a few seasons ago, had to fight a duel for calling the Comte de Paris a young man, and speaking disparagingly of M. Hervé. Luckily our hero was only wounded in the hand, and honour thereupon declared profoundly satisfied.

About is a somewhat odd young man, even among Frenchmen, being, just as parts of Wales are by common report very Welsh, very French indeed. He is versatile, a thorough Jack-of-all-literary-trades, and perhaps sufficiently notable, or notorious, as well as interesting, to afford half an hour's light entertainment from his life and works. There is, in truth, but little of the solid in him, and more brilliancy than warmth. He is not a sun, but a comet—a vagrant star of the most irregular kind—and has lashed his tail with much pyrotechnic display in many imaginative errandies, as well as in many a journey over a large hemisphere of solid earth. He is philosopher as well as novelist, political envoy as well as *littérateur*, correspondent of journals both French and English: indeed, he has had his own special 'thunderer' for years—the redoubtable 'XIX^{ème} Siècle.'

We propose tracing the course of this wandering star through a few material landmarks that his orbit has passed or touched, and

will endeavour also to catch a specimen of the spiritual spark-uscles or meteorolites that have flown off him during his career.

All eminent French *littérateurs*, if we may trust their biographers, belonged in their schoolboy days to one of two classes. They were either dull boys, who were the despair of their pedagogues, or they were marvels of precocity and the glory of their college. The dull boys generally ended in astounding their preceptor by some unusual flash of genius during their last half-year at school; for what had been taken in them for stupidity was in reality contemplation, and their great minds required due growth before disclosing their powers. About is not the slow and seemingly dull boy who matures into the man of assured and steady genius: he is the clever boy at school, and has been a clever boy ever since.

Edmond François Valentin About was born in 1828 at Dieuze, and, after a 'career' at the 'Charlemagne,' carried off, at twenty, honours and prizes in philosophy. 'Philosophy,' at least, is the scholastic name for the studies he underwent. Whether the crude brain of the youth of twenty can have assimilated any genuine philosophy is a matter that maturer minds might doubt. About then entered the normal college, whence he soon proceeded to the French school at Athens. Here he seems to have worked diligently, employing his leisure in collecting details of archæology, and of the life around him. Like Walter Scott, he has a genius for amassing tradition. Soon he discovered a more lively and picturesque way of utilising

his treasures than in the form of heavy works of pure erudition. He picked up stories and legends wherever he could, in addition to his solid facts and statistics, and wrought the whole into an entertaining volume, '*La Grèce Contemporaine*.' Critics said that the book was entirely unreliable; but it afforded its author a successful *début* in the world of letters. Its secret was, perhaps, the spice of political interest which it contained. It created a considerable sensation on its appearance, as the work of a formidable free-lance, but has never taken its place as a standard work. It was a trenchant satire upon Greek life, and Athens was much enraged by it. Ancient courage and modern honour were alike, and indiscriminately, called in question; and some journals represented About as a hunchback jester, seeking to divert Europe from her remorse for neglecting the Greeks. But the author's real aim appears to have been to call public attention, so far as he could, to the selfish and divided government of Greece, her large expenditure, her general mismanagement, and an absence of hopeful prospects for her creditors. The questionable anecdotes and comical aspects introduced, which made a sort of filigree over the more serious thoughts, doubtless made the satire which the book contained almost unbearable. Perhaps without something light and attractive the book would never have been noticed in Paris, as the work of an unknown aspirant, and so About's chances of finding favour for his sterner ideas and credit for himself would have been lost.

'*La Grèce Contemporaine*' met with support and approbation in the '*Revue des Deux Mondes*;' and immediately afterwards a new work from About's pen appeared in that

journal. This was '*Tolla: A Tale of Modern Rome*.' About is fated to arouse a hubbub in all he does, and on this occasion he immediately had the press down upon him for wholesale plagiarism. He was said to have borrowed his narrative, in the most unblushing manner, from an Italian work published in Paris in 1841. In answer to this charge, the author pointed to the concluding paragraphs of the book itself, where he had adverted to the publication of a narrative by the head of the Italian family who had supplied him with the living personages of his tragedy. In a romance, however, such an admission made in the body of the work counts for but little, and is taken by the public as one of the steps the author takes to make his illusions seem more lifelike. The date of publication of the Italian work was, however, specified by M. About, though he does not cite its title. It was '*Vittoria Savorelli, storia del secolo XIX.*' Paris: 1841—published by the father of the unhappy heroine. The book was suppressed immediately after publication, as its disclosures were considered to cast dishonour upon an illustrious Roman family. There does not appear to be a copy of the work in England, and probably a copy is now nowhere obtainable. About says, with regard to this point, in '*Tolla*': 'The very day that this book (the Italian narrative) made its way into Italy, Colonel Coromilla had the whole edition bought up and destroyed; but tradition has, in default of history, perpetuated the remembrance of Tolla's misfortunes.' It seems more than probable, however, that About at one time had access to this little family narrative, and that he used it largely as the foundation of his romance. How largely he availed himself of it, and to what extent

his own work is original, it is impossible now to determine. 'Tolla' is a fascinating work, containing more of the pathetic than is usual with M. About, though even here there is a certain coldness of feeling noticeable, if we compare the work with that of many other French writers. If some of our own novelists had worked upon the story of 'Tolla,' we should have had a much fuller and warmer human quality pervading it. Between its inherent excellences and the sensational mystery connected with the facts of the story, 'Tolla' for a time almost excluded any other literary work as subject of conversation in the Parisian salons.

About's next entry upon the literary arena was with a play, of which we will speak hereafter, which, though brought out with extreme care, came absolutely to grief, enduring, or being endured, for two representations only. In 1855 he published a work on art criticism, entitled 'Voyage à travers l'Exposition des Beaux Arts,' which met with attention; and his collection of stories, published in 1856 as 'Les Mariages de Paris,' went far to console him for his dramatic downfall, and for the attacks upon 'Tolla.' He became one of the staff of the 'Figaro,' and amused himself in directing a polemic full of '*spirituelles impertinences*' against his detractors. These papers he signed by the name of Quévilly. He then found a place on the 'Moniteur,' and supplied romances and *causeries*, the latter often made up of art criticisms, which were afterwards reprinted in a volume. In 1857 he was one of the editors of the 'Learned Ass' ('L'âne Savant, tenant école pour tout le monde')—a singular publication, designed, apparently, to include everything, and something more. Its title-page included fifteen 'Sciences,' beginning with

'Philosophie, Religion, Histoire, Histoire Naturelle, Magnétisme animal, Physique amusante,' six 'Fine Arts,' fourteen 'Social Arts,' of a very mixed character, among which was bracketed 'L'art de bien penser,' with 'L'art de se marier,' five 'Arts Sublimes,' among which are reckoned 'L'art de s'habiller,' and 'L'art de bien mourir.' About published in this remarkable journal a number of agricultural papers, 'Les échasses de maître Pierre,' and some art criticisms. Whether he, positivist and intellectualist, wrote the article which 'L'âne savant' published upon Mr. Home, the spiritualist, who was then staying in Paris, is perhaps doubtful. As for the 'Learned Ass,' it was much too learned to live long: its miscellaneousness is perhaps unequalled.

In 1862 he made another dramatic attempt, which excited a most violent storm, and was finally withdrawn, after four representations, described as being of the most tumultuous character, the author being damned by a coalition of all his enemies, political, religious, or literary. About has the knack of attracting attention of one kind or other to himself, and seems always to live in a whirlwind either of applause or indignation. The piece, after being withdrawn in Paris, was played for several weeks in a number of provincial towns, in the midst of manifestations which bore the character, it is said, of a public event. At this time About was connected with the 'Constitutionnel' as well as the 'Moniteur.' He has always enjoyed a good publisher, Hachette or Levy being his usual assistants, excepting in such cases as when his books had to be published, for discretion's sake, out of Paris.

In 1858 or 1859 About was travelling in Italy, the fruits of which sojourn duly appeared soon

after in works which added to his peculiar reputation. Cleverness is his forte, and this quality pervades his political pamphlets as well as his philosophical studies, his romances as well as his economics. 'La Question Romaine,' one of his political effusions, advocated strongly the abolition of the Pope's temporal power, and was supposed to have been inspired by the Emperor. Whether this was the case, or no, About was among the number of the Emperor's *employés*, for in 1866 he was commissioned to draw up a report on the state of public opinion in France. About has just the 'taking' sort of talent which would make him chosen by a more showy than solid emperor. His talent would insure his making a most specious and brilliant and plausible picture of the public mind on any given topic; but whether it would be true to nature would be quite another matter.

About received the decoration of the Legion of Honour in 1858. He married in 1864. Most English people will remember recent episodes in his life; his letters during the Franco-Prussian war, which were so unusually full of acrid screams that one might imagine the calm of the special correspondent's intellect to have been somewhat disordered. His excited and exciting series of letters was cut short, or, rather, slightly modified by his imprisonment by the German government. He is always next door to being a martyr, but will never be a true one, for he knows too well how to take care of himself. At the present time (autumn, 1873), he is said to be selling his paper, the '*XIX^{ème} Siècle*,' which is to succumb to the pockets of the subtle Royalist party.

Whatever may be said against

About, one valuable possession has always been his, an extraordinary supply of vital energy. Our hero is a literary pugilist, and loves to be fighting. He is not the heavy bruiser; nor does he delight in giving knock-down blows, but leaps and flits from one corner of the arena to the other, dealing his light fantastic raps as the humour takes him. He is knocked down sometimes, in spite of his agility; but his supreme delight appears to be to get up again with a smiling face, and shout out cheerfully that he is not hurt.

He fights in so many arenas, with the same style in each, that we may enter any one of them at random and be sure of a good view of our man. Let us begin by taking him as a dramatist. He writes a play, for instance, with a view, as he says, of reproducing an old French style, and proceeds to bring upon the stage a self-conceited fellow of twenty years old, who seduces two women after having begged them to be his 'two mistresses'—simultaneously, that is, after the idea of a 'happy family.' He does not do this, he says, to decry women 'who are about the best things we have in the world'; nor to preach a new moral—the moral of 'establishments of three'; but explains that the sole merit of the work is that it is written with care, and in a frank style. This is innocent frankness indeed. The Parisian public, well accustomed to the thrilling effects of the passionate, voluptuous, or morbid playwrights who would not scruple to introduce such a plot as Edmond About's, are, nevertheless, at a loss when they come to sit before his work. He is so cool and intellectual that they do not feel at home; they do not know what to make of

him:—whether he is striving after the sensational dramatist's rôle, or only laughing at it. They sit coldly out his first representation and hiss hotly at the second. The play is withdrawn. About straightway harvests his offending dramas into a voluminous single sheaf, and has them printed, to show, as he says, that he does not repent having written them. Their principal defect, he asserts, is that they failed to please. He throws an exquisite arrow of satire at the actors, before whom he is 'a bungling workman who has spoiled the finest stuff in the world.' There is a charming originality in this conception of the relations of author and actors. They are the faultless materials that he has to model or make up with a religious sense of responsibility and carefulness. He praises them all by name; one has grace, another majestic beauty, a third curve, a fourth *erve*. His regrets are most pathetic:—'J'avais tout dans les mains, et j'ai tout laissé perdre.' He has made only a muddle of such dainty materials. After this pretty affectation of pathos he has a little crow about his reviewers:—'If any one were to collect all the evil they have written of my piece, one might make three or four volumes like this one.' What a suggestive thought!—it takes four tomes of critical abuse to damn a bad play. Our gay Spartan then thanks those who treated him sweetly, and very properly associates this toast with the name of Théophile Gautier, at once the gentlest and most perfect critic of France—as he was. Finally, to those who, imagining he was beaten to the earth by his disaster, profited by the occasion to launch forth against him their little lame kicks, he accords a gracious pardon, trusting that they have

gained as much pleasure from their paragraphs as he has gained courage by them. About seems really to be what he professes: there is not a trace of pain or irritation in his style: he evidently does not feel. Here we arrive at the secret of his dramatic non-success: he is only an intellect; and for one playgoer who appreciates intellectually, there are, perhaps, a score who are led anywhere by their feelings. About is clever, but cold; his very comedy is sardonic; his humour is real, but at the same time unreal; his wit touches the brain only. The two wives and the young lover are together: says one of her husband: 'When he married me, I was twenty and he forty.' Whereupon the other wife comments, appreciatively, 'Double.' The complainant resumes: 'To-day he is sixty and I am thirty.' 'Naturellement,' says the lover, in an unmoved 'aside.' For a mathematical joke to be effective with a large audience, it is almost necessary that they should have some hint of the fact, or be in some way led to expect it. Otherwise they are puzzled, and afraid of committing themselves to laughter, for fear the saying may not be meant for a joke after all. M. About's Guillery is a cold-blooded Mephistopheles, whose *bon-mots* are extremely clever, and whose actions would be comic if we were led to expect comedy from so frigid a schemer. If About were not so entirely intellectual he would write a capital play. As it is, the title he gives to his book of plays—'Théâtre Impossible'—is an extremely appropriate one.

It is rarely indeed that we find a born dramatist also a writer on philosophy, or an out-and-out philosophic mind indulging itself in drama. It is because About is

neither born dramatist nor born philosopher that we find him mixed up with so many and various modes of intellectual expression. He is an intellectual man of fine senses, strong temperament, and much energy. He seems to be aware that his many-sidedness prevents him from being concentrated into genius. He writes a big book—'Le Progrès'—which he dedicates to Georges Sand. It contains, he says, his humble sentiment upon the great affairs of life, stated without rhetoric, without passion, without calculation. He has made serious efforts to concentrate all his ideas into it, but allows that the toil was rather severe for an 'esprit vagabond et naturellement dissipé.' He has read and meditated much, and ripened a little, but he expresses his appreciation of the fact that he is no longer a young man, and never can be a great one, but that he can perhaps make himself useful. Madame Sand was one of his earliest sympathisers, and in his dedication to her he refers to her observation upon him, that he was not worse endowed than many others, but that he always let genius slip between his fingers. Madame Sand deserves much credit for her critical acumen; her *protégé* certainly fails to gather himself up into that solid, clenched, single, strenuous fist—so to speak—which is genius. The chances are strongly against any man of mere intellect, however capable, proving to be a genius. There is no heart of warm vitality and earnest purpose acting creatively behind his faculties, and kindling and knitting them into large integral action.

About's 'Le Progrès' is ingenious and specious. His anti-Proudhon argument is fully worked out to the satisfaction of the most

statistical intellect; it resembles somewhat the line of argument of Professor Fawcett upon the same question—the right of property. But About's argument is based only upon a consideration of that side of the question for which his nature has so pre-eminently fitted him; he is an incomplete appreciator of events, and aspects arise before our eyes as we study his dialectics that he seems to have found no place or provision for. But the economists one and all leave out whole spheres of man's nature from their consideration; to them he is a commercial animal who ought to be happy so long as he is permitted to trade freely. We cannot blame About; he has no comprehensive or sympathetic vision of his own, but has fed himself to what he is on Comte, Littré, Chevalier, Laboulaye, Girardin, Paradol, Taine, and a hundred others.

In 'Le Progrès' About refers to a curious little *brochure*, which he had published a few years before, entitled the 'Nouvelle Carte d'Europe.' Therein he had depicted a general congress of sovereigns, and a reapportionment of kingdoms according to their decisions. He prides himself upon several of his speculative proposals having been realised, writing at the time when Napoleon had issued the invitations for his congress, 'numerous acceptances' of which had been received. Corfu was to be restored by England to Greece, in the ideal scheme; Poland was to be resuscitated and made a great nation. How simple politics would become if a great nation could thus be created, without further trouble—by the stroke of a pen, by the alteration of a chart! About seems never to dream that a nation's condition is, to a very large extent, a projection of its inner nature, that its position corresponds

with its spirit and heart—not absolutely, indeed, because of hereditary or circumstantial influences, but as nearly as an expressive face corresponds with a candid soul. Circumstances are a great fact, but circumstances are spiritual, too, and no intellectual argument can save a Poland until it is both self-supporting in itself, and the hearts of the strong races are as averse to a nation's being enslaved as men are to the bondage of an individual negro. So About's ideal congress, as well as Napoleon's projected one, would have found itself out of its depth in an attempt to remodel Europe with a pen. The question is a moral one, not an intellectual one; and nations are to one another now almost as individuals or clans were in lawless days, jealous, fearful, self-assertive, selfish, uncivilised. So M. About's intellect is fighting thin air. It is early days to expect in action the supreme tenets of national morality whilst we have yet much labour before us as regards class morality, and are not at all assured as to individual rapacities. M. About believes in popular sovereignties, armies of progress who will not obey the tyrannic selfishness of kings, but are ready to remodel old and evil institutions. But where are these angelic races who are to act in this manner? Alas! they require centuries of freedom and earnest effort for their training.

There is truth as well as dubious matter in the following picture, which shows M. About at his highest level. 'If one could construct an observatory on the evangelical mount, whence to behold all the kingdoms of the earth, one would have a curious and magnificent spectacle, which neither sovereigns nor diplomatists perceive down below. One would see two

colossal ideas launched one against the other, and which are going soon to come into collision front to front; two locomotives of the force of several thousand soldiers running on the same rails, the one towards the past, the other towards the future, and dragging each in its trail the half of Europe. The elder of the two is called Reaction; the other is Movement, or if you prefer it, Progress. The shock is inevitable, but the issue is uncertain; for these two forces are blind, delivered to their own keeping, without conductor. They stop, repose, or run off the rails by turns, but the interval which separates them diminishes visibly each year, and no one can doubt but that the day of the catastrophe is near.' If we say that, instead of the intellectual abstractions, Reaction and Progress, the real forces at war are selfishness and unselfishness, and that instead of being blind they are composed of minute individual eyes, each with a modicum of appreciative and regulative power, we shall see a more extensive fighting-ground than M. About's Europe, and shall, probably, doubt whether a few years will end the struggle. Would his 'Reaction' and 'Progress' vanish on the arrival of the catastrophe, or would the reaction of the after-time be the dignified and sober thought of the old man, and the progress the fury and sublime energy of the young; or what would be the balancing principles of his perfect era? About's idea of France is that she lives in the narrowest space which separates the two mighty engines referred to. 'Oh, if she would but make choice of one of them!' he exclaims, 'that one would be immediately the stronger.' But, alas! he discovers, and rightly, that France, pushed by a devouring activity, rushes

now to the right, now to the left, and alternately helps on both locomotives. Judging from recent events, as well as from similar ones which happened before 'Le Progrès' was written, we might say even that France has more than once made these awful engines clash.

During the Franco-German war About was arrested by the German government, a fact which led to his screams being heard throughout the English newspapers; but had no very serious result. The pretext for his arrest was an article written in Alsace, and published in Paris in October 1871; but the warrant against him was not carried into effect until September 1872, when he had spent several days in Alsace. It was, doubtless, used as a means of keeping him quiet, and the keenest suffering which was entailed upon him by his captors is somewhat ludicrous to contemplate. About has a horror of onions; in fact, he swoons, or almost swoons, at the smell of them. The Germans, on the other hand, are notoriously fond of that pungent root, so we will hope that accident and not design placed it on M. About's dish for his first meal in confinement. The story goes that he requested his removal, but in vain; that he explained the physiological reason for his request, but still in vain; and further, that every dish which was afterwards brought to him was strongly flavoured with his terrible antipathy.

About has not attained high philosophic honours; he is too miscellaneous to be a great novelist, a great traveller, or a scientific leader. He is, indeed, deemed worthy of a place in an imposing study upon the positivists in France, wherein he is classed with Littré, Rénan, and Taine; but he is placed there to

be vilified, not to be praised. He is spoken of as the new believer, and mocked as the man who, 'being the forgotten publicist of the "Roman Question," the hissed author of "Gaetana," the justly-appreciated inventor of "The Man with the Broken Ear," and "The Nose of a Notary," renounces the frivolous muses, and, ripened by age and misfortune, believes yet in the caresses of the future, and surrounded with an aureole from the maternal hand of Georges Sand, sets out upon a voyage over the unknown ocean of a new intellectual sphere.' He is described as hailing from the poetic solitude of Schlittenback, and penetrated, as a second Numa Pompilius, with the inspiring afflatus of the Egeria of his epoch (Madame Sand), being about to reform the chart of heaven, as he has re-made the map of the globe. This is the sort of greeting and unbelief a Jack-of-all-trades meets with on forcing his way into a dignified community of specialists.

About is much too playful and sparkling for a philosopher. His positivism is most romantic. 'What is certain,' says he, 'is that between "les grandes singes passionnés et intelligens" of Central Africa, and the first man, naked, unarmed, ignorant, wild, all the difference lies in a degree of perfectibility.' We have to thank M. About for introducing us to a new and most poetical creature—the noble, passionate, and intellectual monkey. Though there is nothing new in the idea, there is something most unphilosophically racy in the manner of the saying, that man was formerly only a 'sous-officier d'avenir dans la grande armée des singes.' About's theory is that life is an effervescence from brute matter: inorganic matter after a slow affinage becomes sublime and takes

wings, which are life. Life in its turn grows finer, and produces its *chef-d'œuvre* in the thinking organism, or man. As to the manner in which man came into the world, whether it was by spontaneous generation, or by a *suprême affinage* in the cellule of the animal immediately inferior, is, says About, a question of but mediocre importance. If About had had to make the worlds, we may be sure he would have adopted the first plan that came into his mind, saying to himself, 'That kind of thing does not matter much.'

If About has too much levity and irresponsibility for a philosopher, he is, on the other hand, much too cruelly scientific for a novelist. Wilkie Collins, in his minute horrific studies of obscure naturalistic possibilities, and Dr. O. W. Holmes, in his weird suggestions of rattlesnake influences, or the potent presence of one's ancestors, are as nothing by the side of the subtle ingenuity of the abnormal researches and disquisitions which form the staple of M. About's efforts in fiction.

Some scenes of his romances read like popularised pages of philosophical transactions. He is very fond of physiological and psychological studies. The novel, it is true, cannot be made too universal in its reach; an abstruse suggestion, that would never come before the general public in a learned essay, and that only needs vogue to become popular and useful, is often enabled to be circulated by means of the romance; and every stimulating thought or imaginative idea, however remote, is an element of culture. Let those who would limit the novel within strait classical conditions first find some other medium of communication to take its place as a pleasant vehicle of ideas. But if allowed this universality of area, the novel

must be universal, and not specialistic in itself. Here About transgresses: he is a flagrant specialist. Physiologic speculation and fantasy is his forte, wherein if he is not great, he is at all events generally ingenious. 'Germaine' is a specimen of such pseudo-romance, a novel devoted to an attempt made to slowly poison a young lady with arsenic; at the same time that the poison is being gradually insinuated into her system by her would-be murderer, her medical man is treating her with pure iodine, communicated by a current of hot air, passing over a centigramme of the substance. The combined action of these drugs proves to be the perfect physic for the patient. She grows as fresh as a flower, and as rounded as a fruit. Her murderer marvels, and her doctor draws each morning a picture the very converse of that of Balzac's, where the man with the magic shagreen skin withers concurrently with his talisman. For this patient's doctor, who had drawn for a relative of hers an exact chart of the ravages of her malady upon her breast, traces, morning after morning, a new and fuller contour. The whole incident is ingeniously constructed, but it is a little too minutely scientific to be perfectly artistic.

There are several romances of About's which open physiological questions, 'Germaine,' above referred to, and translated into English under the title of 'The Round of Wrong,' 'L'Homme à l'oreille cassée,' reproduced in America by translation, though not yet in England, 'Le cas de M. Guérin,' and 'Le Nez d'un Notaire,' being the chief. 'Le cas de M. Guérin' is dedicated by the author to his friend Charles Robin, Professeur à la Faculté de Médecine,' with whom we can imagine that he talked over his physiological

curiosities before elaborating them into a volume of so-called romance.

'The Man with the Broken Ear' is innocent and amusing, with just a touch of satire for spice. The book is founded on a French Rip van Winkle; but the accessories, instead of being poetical and dreamy, as in Irving's romance, are scientific and matter-of-fact. The sleeping man is a mummy; not a natural result of embalment, such as Théophile Gautier describes in his romance, or as may be seen in the Pyramids or the British Museum; but a human body, so prepared as to retain a dormant life for any number of years. The original idea of the book is probably a lively criticism upon the disputes as to the seat of the vital principle. About's grand plan, which he quaintly suggests might be employed to advantage in storing up criminals in a torpid state, and retaining them in that condition until their presence became desirable on earth, is desiccation. The human body contains so many gallons of water; gently draw off the water, and the form divine dries up in just the same manner as a miserable shred of a worm or a fly, which may be made fragile as tinder and lifeless as dust, and yet be resuscitated on the re-admission of moisture. Colonel Fongas, being made prisoner during the height of the great emperor's prosperity, and condemned to death, is taken whilst apparently dead, but in reality only numb with cold, by a physician with an idea. He is scientifically desiccated, and a chapter of accidents prevents the provisions for his resuscitation being carried out for forty years. There are many charming episodes connected with the carrying out of this process. The police come to the house of the student who has become the last proprietor of the mummy,

and make serious remonstrances and warnings on the subject of 'disorder.' 'Resuscitation,' they say, 'may not be a crime in itself, but it is so unheard of as to constitute "disorder."' This is M. About's gentle fling at the system of Napoleon III. The medical party proceed with their resuscitatory measures. Steam and warm baths, with frequent poundings and kneadings of the body as in a Turkish bath, are the means employed. A piece of ear, accidentally broken off the colonel, whilst in his dry and fragile state, having been analysed by a chemist, and pronounced by the length of the hairs upon it to be a portion of a *man*, and, by the state of the blood, a fraction of a *living* man, affords the best auguries for success in the supreme experiment. The colonel comes to life, and proves a thorough fire-eater of the old army, almost a Frankenstein in the more modern and less warlike day in which he awoke. He lives for a time, only in reading through the sad histories of the end of Napoleon I., his god. 'What is God,' he asks, 'but a little more universal Napoleon?' At length he learns of the new Napoleon then on the throne, and proceeds to make diligent inquiry with regard to the capabilities of 'this young man,' and whether he is likely, if effectively stimulated, to continue the only programme worth living for—the conquest of the world. After various adventures in his search of the young emperor, by which his warlike burnings are somewhat watered, he receives a letter in answer to his appeal for service from the military administration that, as he is over age, they can only make him a retired colonel, the law being strict as to the age for retirement in each grade. They reckoned his age, of course, by

his birth-register, and ignored the fact that the colonel had awakened in possession of the same manhood as he enjoyed when he fell mysteriously asleep. If cases such as his, they tell him, were to present themselves in sufficient numbers, attention would undoubtedly be directed to the amendment of the law. The colonel is in despair, and falls into brooding melancholy. Some friend makes special application to the emperor, who at once consents to override the law; but before the news can reach the regenerate warrior he has committed suicide in disgust at the degeneracy of the times.

'The Man with the Broken Ear' is, in some respects, the best of About's physiological romances; the story is, so far as we know, based upon an impossibility, but it is one to which a sufficient amount of probability can be imparted by a skilful writer, to make it available for a romance; and it affords M. About a vehicle by which he is enabled very happily to criticise and compare the two empires—those of the great and the little Napoleon, neither of which is truly glorious in the eyes of our author. We should be doing About an injustice if we did not allow that in his physiological studies, however absurd, there is generally infused an element of instructive social satire, which gives them a *raison d'être*, quite apart for their scientific ingenuity.

'Le Nez d'un Notaire' is at first sight a story of a smaller order than the one just named. It is, too, somewhat more absurd, and there are in it one or two details which had better have been omitted. The hero of the romance has his nose cut off in a duel; a cat runs away with the fragment, and the loser does not wish to undergo the extra pain and inconvenience of having the necessary

flesh for a new nose supplied from his own arm or breast. So a poor Auvergnat boy is found, who, for a consideration, consents to have his arm cut, and bound for a month to the notary's face to make a new nose of. He undergoes his monotonous martyrdom with exemplary patience; but the notary, so soon as his nose is restored, pays him his fee, and turns him out of the house with oaths. His nose, he finds to his horror, follows the bodily condition of the individual to whom its constituents belonged; when he starves it grows cold, if he gets drunk it becomes inflamed; and the notary receives a lesson which we believe is meant by M. About to show the dearth of true sympathy in our day between different classes, and even the injurious influences of the higher upon the lower. The book is full of most ingenious consequences of the relation between the notary and the wretched Auvergnat in consequence of the fleshly bond; but some of these are dragged rather cruelly into light, and a tenderer and more refined pen than M. About's would have considerably softened the story.

'Le cas de M. Guérin' is scarcely a fit subject for a romance; indeed it unveils so freely a side of our nature that by natural and proper modesty is kept back from being a subject of open, vulgar discourse, that it is scarcely fitted for the shelves of a general library. A work that describes minutely an imagined change of sex in an individual, however clever and philosophically suggestive, is scarcely fitted for miscellaneous circulation.

The work, being About's, is not without its points of brilliancy, but it also shows his faults at their worst. It acts as a vehicle, too, for his mocking, sardonic satire. His hero, just before his impending curious change, is led

astray. Next morning he weeps in miserable consciousness of a loss of 'honour.' Strange the fact, for, as says About: 'Faute est un mot féminin qui n'a pas de masculin en Français.' This work, even if not on too abnormal a topic for a speculative and purely philosophical disquisition, should certainly not have been published as a romance. It is really too cruel to humanity to probe and disclose such delicacies and depths of being as are here unveiled. The subject, even as treated by M. About, is inherently too serious to be made really amusing: as it is, the book is not a healthy one.

'L'Infame,' too, is morbid; its pathos is not the pathos of nature, but of the abnormal and the exceptional. Analytic details of human life, too, are dragged into its pages in a manner that marks a want of delicacy of feeling. It is interesting, but not pleasantly interesting. Its spell arises from the introduction of new and appalling situations. We feel that About cannot have much love or respect for humanity, or he would not drag the petty weaknesses of our nature so often and so ruthlessly to the light. 'L'Infame' is dedicated by About 'A mon ami Alexandre Dumas, fils.' There is a certain appropriateness in the selection of Dumas for such an honour; still, Dumas, with all his morbidness never penned so unnatural a romance as 'L'Infame.' 'L'affaire Clémenceau,' with all its dire passions and fatalities, is not nearly so inverted or so demoralised as 'L'Infame': it is even healthy and human by comparison.

About's romances are at their best and highest when they have some practical purpose as their *raison d'être*. He is not a novelist proper, because he has no true artistic feeling; but let him have the manners of a new country to illus-

trate, and he will write a book that shall sparkle with many a ray of luminous insight, and shall be overflowing with entertaining incidents and useful facts. The book to which we can accord a greater share of praise than to any other is 'Le Fellah.' This Egyptian study can scarcely be called a romance; but Ahmed-ebn-Ibrahim is one of the pleasantest characters About has drawn. And the book possesses a larger fund of earnestness, and a healthier and more human vitality than any of About's pseudo-philosophic studies. Its painting is careful and lifelike, and its incidents are not monstrous and ghastly. About must have been under some good influence at the time he wrote 'Le Fellah.' We cannot but think his *genre* pictures, on the whole, his best works. His steely satire is more wholesome, and more easily commands our sympathies when directed against national wrongs and the selfishness and corruption of potentates and governments, than when he bares with his remorseless scalpel the secretest nerves of a poor writhing creature in private life, and parades his results unfeelingly before us. He is much too inhuman and cruel an analyst for his knife to touch anything but the tough hide of a corporation, or a system, or an abuse. How useful he has made himself by his biting powers in this direction, the scores of angry pamphlets against him from all quarters amply bear witness. He is a very Ishmaelite, but instead of mourning for his isolation, he mocks at it. He scarifies, and refuses to be scarified in return: he is a flayer without a skin.

About claims a partial, however insufficient, excuse for having built his romances upon the abnormal and the excruciating. Everything normal and natural, as well as

almost every possible form of the moderately unusual, or the moderately questionable, has been used up in Paris. He shall tell the pathetic story himself:—

'The passions are not extinguished in the heart of man, and the "Gazette des Tribunaux" registers from time to time the details of a real drama well filled with murder; but the theatre has long since used up all the dramatic situations. It has made us tremble, shudder, and weep upon all kinds of death, applied to all categories of persons: we have seen killed kings, dogs, fathers, mothers, sons, daughters, husbands, wives, lovers, friends, enemies, soldiers, passers-by, innocents, culprits—by steel, lead, fire, water, cold, hunger, thirst, fear, joy, shame, remorse, shipwreck, volcanoes, explosions, earthquakes, avalanches, and descending ceilings. We have been served to satiety with love, love platonic, honest, adulterous, incestuous, timid, shameless, cruel, sanguinary; with all kinds of folly, folly sweet, lamentable, furious, senile, momentaneous, incurable, simulated, and dissimulated; with robbery of glory, of fortune, of a name, a child, a pocket-handkerchief. We have worked up treason, devotion, cowardice, heroism, victory and defeat, justice and injustice, apparition, resurrection, anthropophagy, metamorphosis, and apotheosis. We have placed on the boards not only men, but dogs, cats, birds, elephants, serpents, lions, tigers, bears, apes, goats, and magpies. There is not a fact, natural or supernatural, possible or impossible, which has not been represented a hundred times before the pit; not an idea which has not been said over and over, not a sentiment which the authors have not indicated, expressed, developed, forced, falsified. The French lan-

guage is rich, but it is not inexhaustible. The dramaturges have used up all the expressions for joy and for grief, for trust and for despair, for love and for hate. The intelligent spectator divines at the first word what is going to be represented to him during the evening: he knows the drama by heart before having seen it. Violence even and brutality leave us cold, since the dramatic hammer has treated our hearts like anvils. We become *blasés* on everything.' In comedy, too, there are not many more good situations to glean; 'but,' says About, 'there will be always things ridiculous to paint, and man is pleased at the spectacle of the small infirmities of others. It is grievous that censure prohibits us from painting all. . . . We have among matters for regret, however, that a portion of the public, by reason of being tickled, too often has become hardened in the skin, like old leather. Our epoch has produced a species of comedy which has the same relation to French gaiety that absinthe has to light wine. To make certain people laugh, it is necessary to scorch their armpits with claws of tempered steel.'

We may take the above true story as About's explanation for having written the works he has. He has tried to run a race with a new sensation and win; he has achieved the manufacture of certain very remarkable works that will add to the number of the curiosities of a most singular epoch, when it comes to be studied by the sager and serener ages to come.

About is known in England more for his political peculiarities, and pertinacity in getting himself into hot water, than for his novels. We do not pay so much attention to French literature in England as they do in America;

at least if we may judge by the number of translations made in America from the French. About's books are nearly all to be had in an English dress; but is it owing to our public being better acquainted with the French language, or less interested than the American public, that so many of About's literary *confrères* are translated into American, so to speak, and not into English? We dip at random into the advertisement pages of the American edition of About's 'Man with the Broken Ear,' and find four translations from the French described on one page: 'Fanchon, the Cricket,' by Georges Sand; 'Human Follies,' by Noriac; 'Romance of a Poor Young Man,' by Feuillet; and 'Romance of the Mummy,' by Théophile Gautier. We translate for the English public, it is true, a little of Balzac, and a great deal of Dumas, but we have not kept ourselves *au fait* with the current issues of the French press, like our friends over the sea, to whom Paris is a glittering heaven.

About's ingenuity and brilliance come out in greater force than do thoughts more serious and appropriate, when he discourses on liberty and free-trade. 'Such a race,' he says—and perhaps we can discover what race he refers to—is admirably placed for the production of meat, of iron, of porcelain, and the romances of Dickens; but nature refuses it wine, oil, silk, industrial art, and the comedies of Alexandre Dumas, *fla*. Let it produce in superabundance the goods which cost the least to its soil and temperament, and send us the overplus in exchange for ours.' Here is free-trade in a nutshell. We must make a new class for M. About: too philosophic for a novelist, he is too gay for an orthodox scien-

tist: he is the sparkling originator and sole member of the sect of Romantic Philosophers.

Perhaps his most serious work is his 'A. B. C. du Travailleur,' a work which has recently been reproduced by translation in this country. He declares it to have been composed directly for a group of workmen with whom he came in contact, and who were in search of ideas.

Though, as a whole, this book is not that of a great and wise master of social science, yet it contains some home truths, and has sufficient practical suggestiveness, and deductions from economic facts so forcibly, however chillingly, stated, as to be well worthy of study.

The artisan's household interior is described with its small wealth of produce, and results of labour extracted from every quarter of the globe. He is truly told that he is better fed, clothed, and housed than the mediæval knights, and even than the kings of the 'Iliad.' But About does not add the corollary, which the workman is so bitter about, that these were kings of Spartan frugality, and that his employer has a palace, maybe, more superb than that of the most luxurious king of the proudest and richest days of old. But the caution is valuable anyhow, for animal comfort is the rock that all classes are bruising their souls on.

Another warning has reference to discontent. Our author paints the workman's envy of his employer, as one who works two hours while he works ten, goes when he likes, and has no one to bind him. But the employer, rejoins About, is no more self-gratulatory than the operative: he, too, is thinking of what he has not. This is not much of an argument. The kind friend

suggests another cause of complaint when he makes the workman deplore the fact of being a 'mercenary;' but he suggests little in the way of meeting it; while the industrial partnership idea and its most hopeful successes in working might very well have been discussed at such a juncture.

About's idea of civilisation is true as far as it goes, but it is just his intellectual half-truth. The history of civilisation, he says, can resume itself in six words: 'Plus on sait, plus on peut.' Luckily, there are forces at work beyond mere knowledge, else mankind would perish utterly in the midst of a vast world of machinery.

Another of our author's truths half-seen is that almsgiving is bad, as disturbing the equilibrium of industry and doing harm to the majority of toilers. His suggestion for the remedy of parasitical mendicancy is ingenious, but theoretical, for to carry it out, we should first have to moralise our commercial system, which, indeed, is an end to be aimed at, but an impossibility, if expected at once. His notion is that the poor, instead of being given alms, ought to have loans made to them discreetly at the usual rate of interest. Poor About! before making such a suggestion to working men, he should have known where to put his hand on a capitalist ready to risk his money at five per cent. on the note of hand of an impecunious artisan. About suggests a society subscribing towards this scheme as a regenerative work. This is his most earnest suggestion, but with all his positive philosophy

he has not devised an economic mode of doing away with evils, but only new and thinly-disguised systems of almsgiving. What the pets of these schemes really want is something they can see they have a right to, and not the patronising and perhaps fluctuating benevolence of a few gracious gentlemen.

About—we have, doubtless, said enough to show—is many-sided and not uninteresting. He affords intermittently and here and there a rough intellectual stimulant in his varied and variable works, but his brilliance is metallic, and he manifests, as has been truly said, 'de l'esprit jusqu'à l'abus.' He is very erratic, and often very improbable even when he is out of the domain of eccentric physiological speculations. As a whole, his writings lack body, and we are sensible of the mere theoretic revel that is at the base of many of them—the intellect rejoicing to run its course: with all their unmistakable cleverness and excess of ingenuity there is a something ephemeral about them; and they are not likely to last so long as the works of many a humbler man who possesses more feeling and a more earnest respect for the deeper realities of our nature. It may be doubted whether a man without depth of feeling and affection—an intellect rather than a heart—can ever achieve anything truly great or lasting. About lacks the constancy that binds, the warmth that kindles, and the depth that brings fertility: he may be brilliant, versatile, original; he may scale prodigious heights, but he will scarcely arrive at the serene table-land of greatness.

KENINGALE COOK.

TO PÉPA.

(ALFRED DE MUSSET.)

O PÉPA, when at fall of night—
 Your mother's benediction said—
 Kneeling beneath your lamp's dim light,
 You pray beside your little bed ;

When troubled hearts are fain to take
 Sweet counsel from the friendly night,
 Your rustling hair you downward shake,
 And look beneath the bed in fright ;

When slumber, after toil of day,
 Folds all around you whom you love ;
 O Pépita, my darling, say,
 What is it then you're thinking of ?

Who knows ? Perchance of tales it is,
 Where lovely ladies mournful move ;
 Perchance of hope's dream-promises,
 And all the waking-times thereof ;

Perchance of tiny gray mouse born
 From mighty hills in travail-pain ;
 Of sugar-plums ; of marriage-morn ;
 Of castles, or of loves—in Spain ;

Perchance of talks in tenderness,
 Of naïve hearts like your own, your thought ;
 Perchance of dancing or of dress,
 Perchance of me, perchance of—nought.

FREDERICK E. WEATHERLY.

OPEN! SESAME!

BY FLORENCE MARRYAT (MRS. ROSS-CHURCH), AUTHOR OF 'LOVE'S CONFLICT,'
'NO INTENTIONS,' ETC., ETC.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

'IT SHALL CARRY ME THROUGH TO THE END.'

AS Mrs. West reads the fatal document her face undergoes all manner of changes. She is not prepared for this. She is not aware what effect it may have upon her brother-in-law.

'So cruel of Everil,' she thinks, 'and so foolish. To compromise her reputation unnecessarily, and to give poor Valence a shock that may kill him—that will *certainly* kill him,' she continues mentally. 'And yet I ought to tell him of it. He is the principal person concerned, and he would never forgive me if I kept him in ignorance a moment longer than was necessary. In his weak state too. I shouldn't wonder if he died on the spot. He has borne her coldness, he might have borne her death, but his own dishonour—*never!* The Valences are the proudest of the proud. They would sooner kill their wives with their own hands than see them disgraced. He certainly must hear of it—and that at once—or some one may anticipate me with the news.'

She flies to the Earl's room as she finishes, and knocks loudly at the door.

It is opened by John Bulwer. At the sight of him the widow's face falls.

'What on earth is the matter? Your brother-in-law is asleep!'

'Let me in at once! I must see him! I have the most dreadful piece of news for him. Everil has eloped with Captain Staunton!'

'You cannot communicate the intelligence to him in that abrupt

manner,' cries Bulwer, attempting to restrain her from entering the dressing-room. 'Think of what you are about, Mrs. West! you may kill Valence with the shock.'

'It is right he should know it at once. He would never forgive me if I kept it from him. Valence! I wish to speak to you.'

'What do you want with me?' inquires the Earl feebly, as he rouses from his uneasy slumber.

'A fearful disgrace has fallen on us. It is shocking—abominable! I hardly know how to break it to you, but your wife has run away with that villain, Maurice Staunton.'

'What?' exclaims Valence with an oath.

'Everil has left you, Valence. She has eloped with her old lover. I have just found this note upon her toilet-table to inform us of the fact.'

'Read it, Bulwer,' he says in an unnaturally calm voice when contrasted with his first exclamation.

Bulwer takes the paper from the widow's hand.

'Tell Valence, Agatha, that I have left him. You will not receive this probably till noon, and by that time I shall be in D——. Tell him he is well quit of me. It is unnecessary for me to say more.'

'EVERIL.'

'Oh, my dear brother!' cries Mrs. West as she prostrates herself before the Earl, 'don't let this terrible shock have any effect on

your precious health. She is not worth grieving after. She has been deceiving you from the beginning. Try and forget her, Valence, and think only of the prospect before you. Hold him up, Mr. Bulwer. Give me that salts bottle. Let me fetch some cold water. He will faint. He will die! Oh, this is downright murder! A curse will rest upon her to her life's end.'

But Lord Valence puts the officious hands away from him almost roughly.

'When did they leave the Castle?' he demands of Bulwer. His voice is not loud nor trembling, but very quiet, very cold, and very decided.

'Hours and hours ago,' replies Agatha.

'That is impossible, Mrs. West, for when the Earl came up to his room, Lady Valence was standing in the corridor in her ball-dress.'

'The hateful, deceitful, wicked creature!' says Agatha, weeping.

'You have not been here more than two hours, Valence. It is only just four o'clock. If they have been an hour on the road, it is more than is probable.'

'Go and inquire for me, Bulwer. Find out all the particulars you can, and come back quickly!'

He is sitting now upon the couch on which he has been sleeping, but he makes no attempt to move or throw off his dressing-gown.

'Lie down again, dear Valence,' says Mrs. West coaxingly, as soon as Bulwer has departed. 'It is cruel you should be agitated thus, and just at this time too! You feel faint, I am sure. Let me unloose your cravat.'

'Leave me alone!' replies the Earl, in the same hard, unnatural voice. 'I am not faint. I need no assistance. Leave me alone!'

Then he adds more gently:

'This is a sorrow in which no one can intermeddle, Agatha. It is a disgrace that must be averted at all costs.'

'But how can it be?' she exclaims in surprise.

'Valence!' says Bulwer, re-appearing, 'they cannot have left the Castle more than an hour, at the very outside. I have made the most searching inquiries and find that a strange travelling-carriage with post-horses that arrived here about ten o'clock last night was seen to drive through the Lodge gates again at about three this morning, although no one at the Castle saw it take up its freight. Lady Valence's absence seems perfectly unknown to all but us three. Let us make a pact to keep it secret for the present.'

'To what avail?' says Agatha, who would like to proclaim the fact from the house-top.

'Post-horses!' murmurs the Earl. 'I'll lay a wager mine would outstrip them. Order the new pair of bays to be put to at once, Bulwer.'

'I have ordered them, Valence. They will be ready in ten minutes.'

'To what purpose?' again demands Mrs. West.

'Where is Johnson?' cries Lord Valence, leaping from his couch. 'Tell him particular business calls me to D—to-night, and he must come at once and dress me.'

'Oh! what is all this for, dear brother?'

'I will follow them and prevent this d——d villainy, if I die for it.'

'Follow them! and in your condition! It is impossible! It is madness! You will perish on the road. Mr. Bulwer, exert your influence, exercise your friendship, and prevent the Earl from running so terrible a risk.'

'No one shall prevent me,' exclaims Lord Valence, to whose

pale face a bright scarlet flush has risen. 'I have few enough hours left me on earth, and I will spend them as I choose. My darling in the clutches of that villain!—my wife—than whom I believed no woman to be more pure—contaminated by his touch, his love, his villainous companionship! No! I know that I am weak—helpless—dying—but I have strength enough and life enough to follow and rescue Everil before she is lost for ever, *and so help me God, I will do it!*'

He is hurrying on his out-door apparel now, and moving about the room at such a rate that Bulwer, remembering his late condition, becomes really alarmed.

'Everything shall be arranged as you wish it, Valence, but pray be careful. Your health is very delicate, and by these violent efforts you may frustrate the object you have in view.'

'You mean I shall die before I overtake her. No, Bulwer, not unless it takes till noon to reach D—. I may die at her feet! I may find her—still pure and undefiled—and pray her with my dying breath to guard the name she bears a little longer for my sake. But not before—not before! An unnatural strength has risen up within me in the last few minutes, and it shall carry me through to the end.'

'This is suicide!' cries Mrs. West. 'I shall go in search of Dr. Newall. He may be able to persuade you not to kill yourself.'

'Stay where you are, Agatha. It is my command this story goes no farther. I forbid you even to call my valet. Bulwer is doing all that is necessary for me, and the fewer tongues there are to wag the better.'

'But you will let me go with you, Valence, surely?'

He is about to object, when Bulwer interferes.

'Yes, Valence. Let your sister-in-law come too. She may be of use to us. I have a purpose in making the request,' he adds, in a lower key.

'Very good! Then, Agatha, you may accompany us. My darling may—who knows?—consent to return with me, and need the assistance of a woman. And you have always been good to her and me. Forgive me, Agatha, if I have spoken harshly to you, but I am sorely agitated.'

'We are all ready now,' observes Bulwer, as Mrs. West—evidently very uneasy in her mind—rejoins them, dressed for travelling.

'Give me my watch,' cries Valence. 'What is the time?—twenty minutes past four! Who would have thought it was only twenty minutes since Agatha brought me this fatal news?'

In reality it is more like an hour: but Bulwer has quietly put back the hands of the watch, and intends to repeat the operation whenever he has another opportunity.

'There is nothing more to wait for,' says Valence. 'Let us start at once.'

His companions look at him in silent amazement. In his intense excitement all trace of illness has left him. He walks upright and firmly, and his voice has assumed a tone of command. His thin face is flushed and feverish; his eyes shine. He has all the appearance of a man bent on some great enterprise. Only when he finds himself shut up in the carriage, and journeying, notwithstanding the fleetness of the new bays, far less speedily than he desires, does he for a while lose the false strength lent him by excitement.

'That she should have deceived

me!' he says; 'she whom I worshipped as everything that was purest and best of her kind! Oh! Bulwer, I have borne the misery of the change in her behaviour—I have borne her coldness and indifference—I could have borne even open unkindness and contempt; but *I cannot bear her dishonour!*'

'Hush, Valence! That is just what we are going to prevent. I'll lay you any odds we reach D— long before they do, and that you meet Lady Valence face to face before she has taken off her bonnet.'

'But how are we to tell *where* to find them?'

'There are not so many hotels in D— that we need be long at a loss; but, as it happens, I have discovered, through the agency of'—here Bulwer, not being prepared for the contingency, halts for an idea—'of a note, in fact, which her Ladyship must have dropped accidentally—I am half afraid, though, I left it behind me—that their destination is the Duke's Head Hotel.'

'The d—d scoundrel!' mutters Valence.

'He appears to have secured rooms there, of course in his own name. If we present ourselves boldly, and demand admittance to them, we are sure to be taken for the right party. That is one reason I wished Mrs. West to accompany us. We shall be ready, therefore, to greet the fugitives on their arrival.'

'Ready to shoot him down like a dog, directly he enters the room,' replies Valence, laying his hand upon the case of pistols he had insisted on bringing with him.

'No, Valence, no! You must promise to restrain yourself, or you will force me to throw that case out of window.'

'I shall promise nothing! I feel as if the bare sight of his false

face will be sufficient to make me thirst for his blood!'

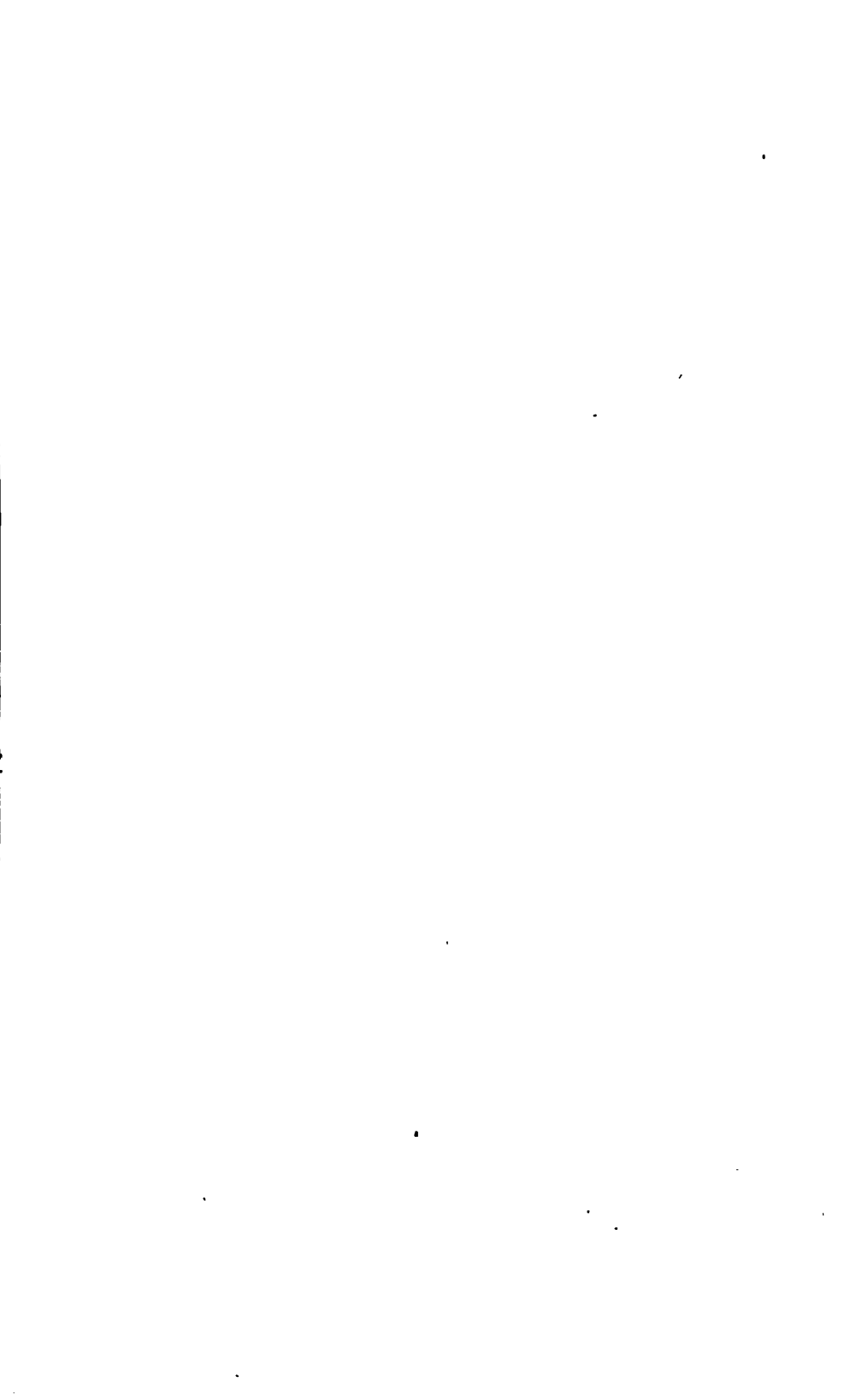
To all this Mrs. West replies nothing. She, who has ever taken the foremost position in everything connected with her brother-in-law, now offers neither to second nor to combat his opinions, but sits silent and shivering by his side, and with a very strong consciousness upon her that her day of triumph is coming to an end.

She seems terribly afraid of, and nervous in the presence of Bulwer, whose keen eyes seek her face whenever she appears likely to make a remark, until she subsides completely into herself, and the conversation, such as it is, is carried on between the men alone.

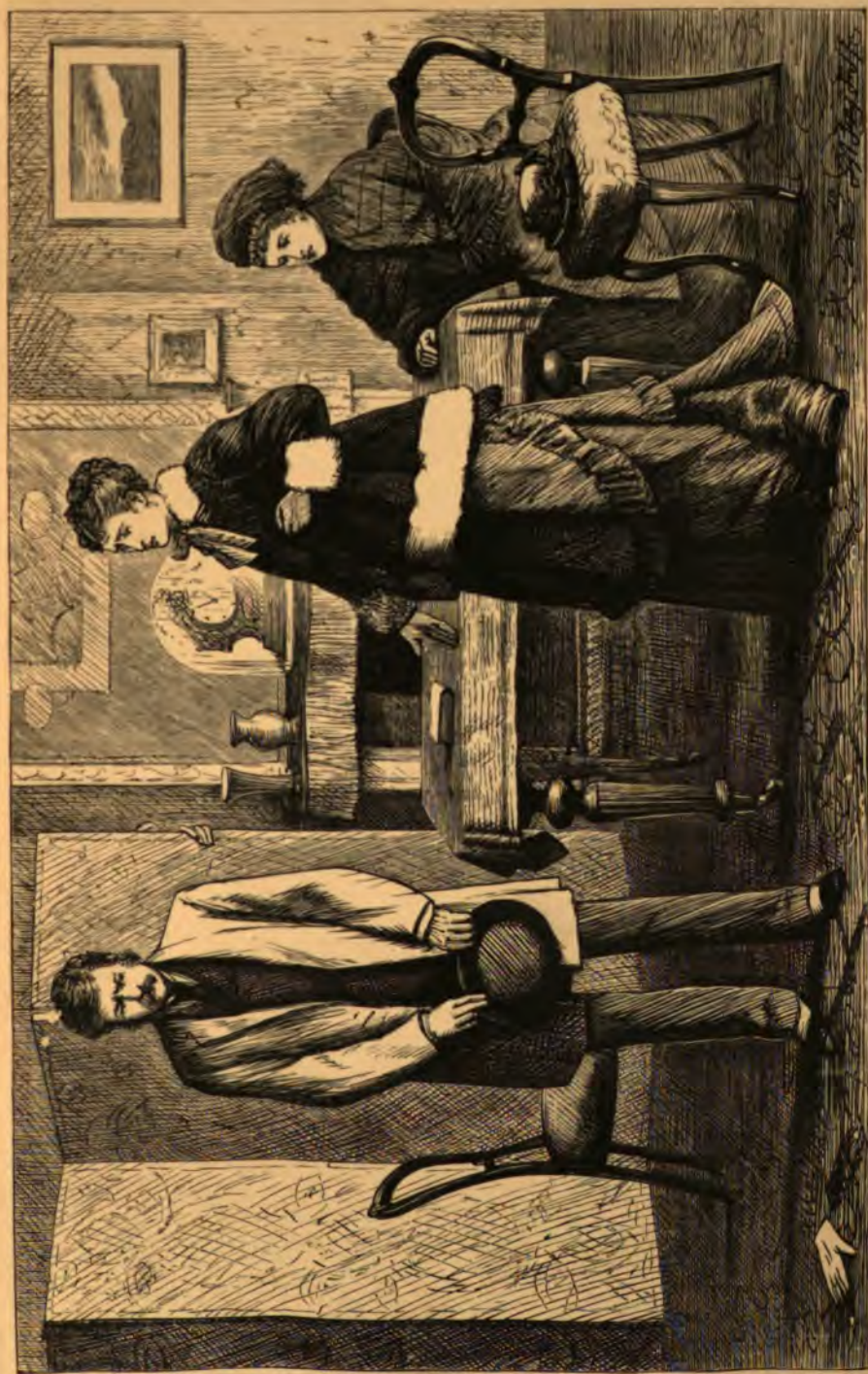
The town of D— is situated some sixty miles from Castle Valence. At the first stage at which they call for post-horses they find the other carriage (as is but natural) must be some miles ahead of them; the second, it has not left behind it more than twenty minutes, and before they gain the fourth, they have passed it at a hand-gallop—Lord Valence promising the postillions an extra sovereign for every mile they gain.

The race now becomes exciting. At the last stage they take Staunton's pre-engaged post-horses, and are well on their road to D— before he arrives to swear at the ostlers for not being ready with the change. Altogether, they do the sixty miles in about seven hours, and drive, steaming, up to the door of the Duke's Head Hotel at twelve o'clock; although Lord Valence's watch, by reason of his friend Bulwer's unceasing anxiety to consult the time on the evidence of his own senses, only points to ten.

'Can it have stopped?' says the unsuspecting Earl, as he places his watch to his ear. 'No, it is going—and yet only ten o'clock! It



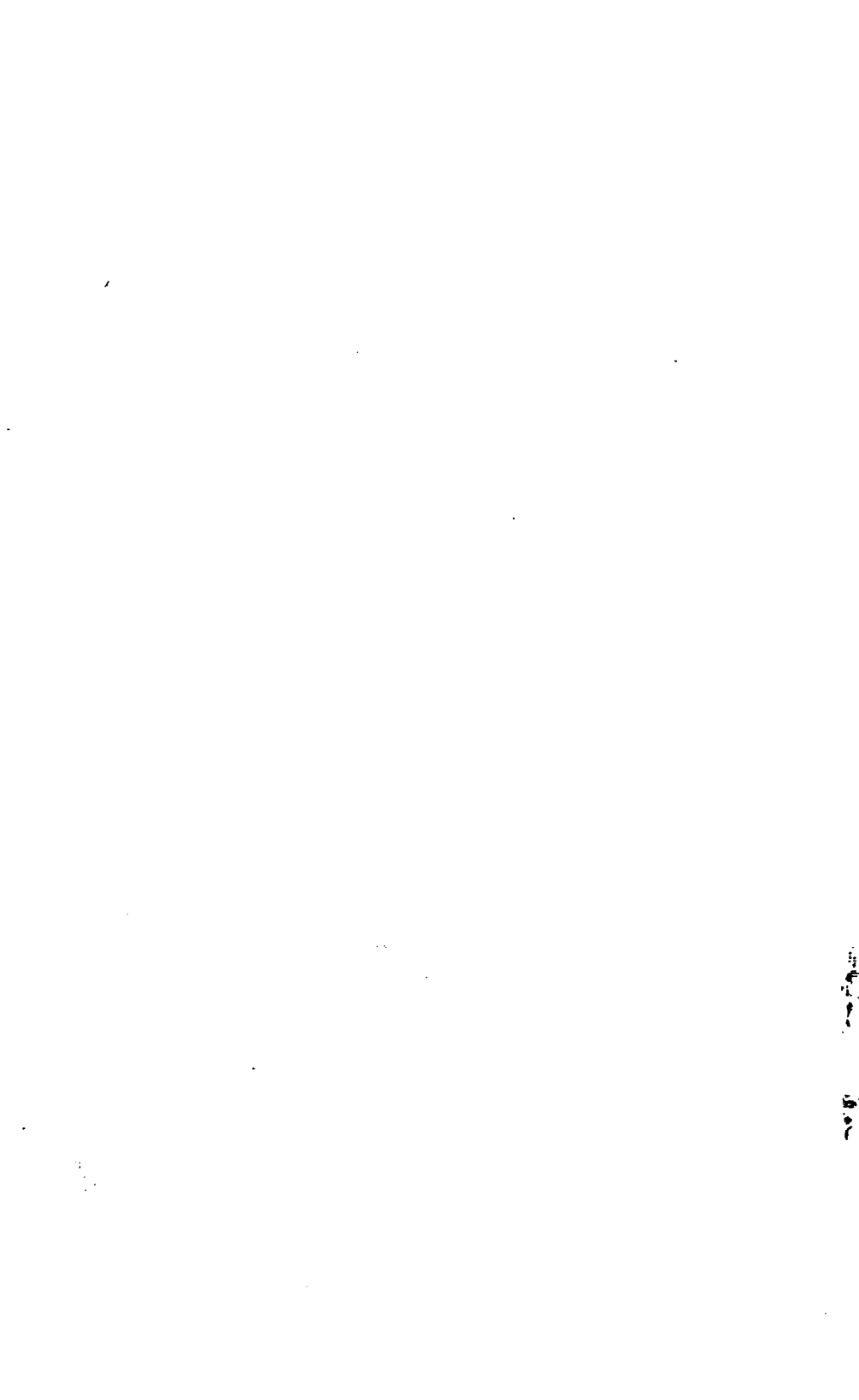




Drawn by F. A. Fraser.]

OPEN SESAME!

'What question of honour can there be between you and me?'



seems almost incredible we should have done it in that time.'

'Never mind the time,' replies Bulwer, who is very much afraid Valence may think of comparing his repeater with the hotel clocks. 'The main thing is, we are here before them. And now brace up all your nerves, my dear friend, for the meeting is not far off. They cannot be many miles on the road behind us.'

'Supposing they are not coming to this hotel, after all?'

'I will ascertain that at once,' says Bulwer, as he walks boldly into the vestibule of the Duke's Head, and demands if rooms have not been ordered there in the name of Captain Staunton.

'Captain Staunton, sir? Yes, sir,' replies the waiter with alacrity, as he prepares to precede them upstairs. 'This way, if you please, sir.'

He ushers them into a handsome sitting-room, in the grate of which a fire is burning, and these preparations are evidently made for some expected arrival.

'And now send the landlord to me,' says Bulwer authoritatively, 'at once—do you hear? We must make a confidant of the landlord,' he continues, in explanation, to Valence, 'or there will be a fuss about the rooms when they arrive.'

'But why prevent it? What do I want more than to meet the villain face to face?'

'Valence, I have a notion that your wife is not what you think her to be.'

'God bless you for saying so!'

'And I want you to promise me not to disclose your presence to them rashly, but to be patient, and hear first on what terms they appear to be together.'

'Do you think I could stand by and listen to my own dishonour?'

'No! When you hear that, our compact is over. But you see this

screen: all I ask of you is, that on their entrance you will conceal yourself and us behind it until you see how the land lies.'

'Your request is a very strange one, Bulwer!'

'I know it is; but I love you, Valence, and I make it with a view to your happiness. Will you trust me?'

'I consent so far, that I will do as you wish, if you will promise on your part not to put any constraint upon my actions.'

'I promise. And now I will go and speak to the landlord. Without mentioning names, or compromising any one, I can easily make him understand that it is for the reputation of his hotel he should fall in with your wishes on the subject. But will you not eat anything, Valence?'

'Eat! How could I eat while I am in this state of miserable suspense? Oh that they would but come!—that I could feel that that hound was settled with for ever!'

He strides restlessly up and down the apartment as he speaks, looking as well and as strong as possible.

'I leave the Earl with you for a minute, Mrs. West,' says Bulwer significantly. '*Be careful of him!*'

He regards her steadfastly as he says the words, and Agatha reddens, coughs uneasily, and turns her face away to the window.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

HER PARDON IS COMPLETED.

'THEY are coming upstairs—they have just arrived!' cries John Bulwer eagerly, as he hurries back into the hotel sitting-room. 'Get behind the screen, Valence—be quick, Mrs. West. They must have

taken on four horses at the last stage to be here so soon after us. And now—not a word, I beseech you, till you ascertain how it is between them.

They have but just ensconced themselves, when the door is flung open, and there is a sound as of several feet entering the apartment.

'Why isn't breakfast ready for us?' exclaims Staunton loudly.

'We waited to hear what you would wish served, sir. It can be got ready in a moment.'

'What will you have, Everil?'

'Nothing.'

'Nothing? You must be hungry after so long a drive. Where's the bill of fare, waiter?'

'Here it is, sir.'

'Ah!—chops—steaks—salmi—fricassee—fish—omelette. Which shall it be?'

'I have already told you I wish for nothing.'

'Hang it all! we must have some breakfast. Well, give us anything, waiter—everything—send up just what you choose.'

'Very good, sir. It shall be ready in half an hour.'

'And send the chambermaid to show the lady to her room.'

'Do no such thing. I am not going to any room.'

'You will want to take off your travelling things.'

'I intend to remain here,' answers Lady Valence, as she removes her bonnet and throws it on a chair.

'At all events, let the maid go.'

'No! I desire she remains with me.'

The waiter, seeing all is not right, bows and leaves the room.

'Everil! what is the meaning of this?' says Captain Staunton as he comes up to her side. 'What unaccountable change has come over you?'

'A desire to have my own way.'

'But I insist on your maid leaving us. I am not going to sit down to breakfast with a servant.'

'I shall not ask you to do so. Alice, oblige me by throwing up your veil.'

The supposed lady's-maid does as she is desired, and reveals the features of Miss Mildmay.

'What farce is this?' cries Maurice Staunton, staggering backward with astonishment. 'What do you mean by bringing a third person to be witness to our flight?'

'I brought her as a protection against yourself.'

'You are trifling with me, or you do not know the meaning of the words you utter.'

'Excuse me—it is you who do not understand; but I will try and make things plain to you. Maurice Staunton, I have had my revenge! In leaving Castle Valence with you, I have but carried out a project by which we shall be separated for evermore.'

'This, then, is the solution of your cursed coldness all the way to D——! You have been playing for revenge, madam, have you, and not for love?'

'For both: revenge on you, and love for one whom to name in the same breath is to dishonour. How shall I tell you all my motive so that you may understand it? You remember how I married Valence?'

'I remember—without a spark of love for him, and all your heart—such as it was—fixed upon me.'

'Ay, *such as it was*—you may well say that. But when I learned to love him, Staunton—my noble, generous husband—it was with all my heart and soul, and mind and strength.'

'To prove which, you bolt from him with me.'

'To save him—because there seemed no other way. I married him, apparently a dying man, as you took pains to let me know be-

forehand; and when I learned to value him, my first question was, if it were possible to save him. It appeared hopeless. He had permitted his study of the supernatural to have so fatal an effect on him, that his brain—so the doctors told me—had become diseased, and incapable of exciting itself to reason.'

'The fool!' mutters Staunton.

Her fury is sublime in its magnitide.

'Don't you *presume* to speak to me by such a term of him! *You*, who are not worthy to unloose the latchet of his shoe. When you found your way into the Castle, and presumed to address me in your former tones, a design crept into my mind—whether hell or heaven-born time alone can tell. I had just been told that the only chance for my beloved Valence's restoration was to work upon his feelings. I knew that he was jealous of you. I resolved to give him that chance of life, even if I died for it myself.'

'In short, you have made me the tool by which your husband is to be restored to health, madam?'

'I hope so—I think so.'

'But you forget, at the same time, that you must lose your reputation. Who will be revenged now?'

'Not you, Captain Staunton—not you. You have never had a kiss to boast of, nor a line which you can produce against me: and as for this hurried journey, have I not had my friend Alice Mildmay to bear me company as well? Not that I expect ever to be restored to my former position. If all the world believed me innocent, and *he* thought I had been guilty of one look against his honour, I know that Valence would never receive me as his wife again.'

Here Everil stops, and holds her hand against her beating heart;

and Alice Mildmay creeps up to her side and whispers comfort to her, whilst Staunton sneers to himself apart.

'But if he lives, I can bear even that. If the dread of losing me by so terrible a means has had the effect which I have hoped and prayed for, and serves to rouse him to the consciousness that his physical weakness is a delusion of his own senses, I shall have repaid him in some measure for the love and patience he has displayed towards me, and be willing to bear my just share of the punishment which accompanies even the appearance of evil.'

All this time Bulwer has had the greatest difficulty in restraining Valence from rushing out upon Maurice Staunton and engaging in a hand-to-hand combat with him, which must have resulted in the most disastrous effects to himself. But his friend constrains him by look and touch to listen for a little longer, although his eyes are starting from his head with anxiety and excitement.

'And pray, how do you expect this potent spell to work?' demands Staunton sarcastically.

'I do not know—I cannot tell; but Mr. Bulwer is working with me, and I have trusted all to him. Valence will follow me—I am sure he will—and very soon he ought to be here. Oh! how shall I meet him? How shall I tell him why I acted as I have done?'

'You should have thought of that before, madam.'

'I am here, dear Everil,' whispers Alice. 'I will speak to the Earl for you.'

'No; he shall hear it from no lips but mine; and then, if he can forgive—if he *can* forgive—' she repeats in a broken voice, as she throws herself sobbing upon Alice's breast.

'This is a pleasant surprise you

have prepared for me, I must say; and not a particularly honourable one,' remarks Staunton.

'Honour! What question of honour can there be between you and me?' she interrupts scornfully.

'Call it by what name you will, madam, it is conduct I am not disposed to put up with. I did not take the trouble to come to D—— this morning to be confronted by your husband and a fire-eater like Mr. Bulwer; therefore, as you will so soon be in their good hands, I shall take the liberty of wishing you good morning.'

'Not so fast!' cries Lord Valence, as he rushes from behind the screen and seizes Maurice Staunton by the throat—'not till you have given me a reckoning of this day's work, you d——d dishonourable villain!'

His eyes are flaming fury, his hand grasps a pistol. His adversary feels that, notwithstanding his weakness, with right on his side, he is not a man to be trifled with.

'You would not kill me where I stand!' he utters in alarm.

'I would shoot you like a dog, were death at the hands of an honourable man not too good for such a cur as you! Speak! what answer have you to make to me for your villainy towards my wife?'

'You must have heard Lady——'

'Don't presume to mention her name with your dastardly lips, or I will cram this pistol down your throat. Yes, I have heard all! I have heard the motive *she* had for this imprudent step. But what was yours?'

'Mr. Bulwer,' pleads Maurice Staunton, 'are you going to stand by and see me murdered?'

'I wish I might! But I'm afraid there's no chance of it. Horsewhip the scoundrel, Valence, and let him go. You defile your hands by holding him.'

'Out of my sight, then!' exclaims the Earl, as, opening the door, he strikes Staunton across the mouth and throws him into the passage. 'Out of my presence, and never dare to enter it again, or you may rouse me to give you a worse punishment than this.'

He slams the door in the face of the crestfallen Staunton, and, throwing himself upon a chair, wipes the perspiration from his forehead.

'I believe it has done me good,' he remarks, with one of his quaint, rare smiles, as he looks up with glowing eyes into the face of Bulwer. He glances towards his wife, and she comes gliding to his feet.

'Not there, my love,' he says tenderly, 'not there. Your place has never been—shall never be, one hair's breadth lower than my heart.'

'Oh! Valence! is it possible that you forgive me?'

'Can I afford to say No!' he answers, with his head bowed down on hers, 'when I have so few more words to utter. Bulwer! what time is it?'

'It is *one o'clock*, my Lord.'

The Earl leaps from his chair.

'*One o'clock!* Impossible! It was only ten when we arrived here!'

'It was past eleven, Valence. Your watch must have gone wrong.'

'*One o'clock!* It cannot be! *One o'clock!* What day is this, then, Bulwer?'

'The third of February.'

'The third of February, and *one o'clock!* Why am I here? What extraordinary mystery is this?'

'A mystery which I can explain, Valence. No, Mrs. West, I will listen to no pleadings on your part. To expose you is a duty which I owe to my friends.'

'What is it you have been doing, Agatha?'

'Let me relieve Mrs. West of the pain of being her own accuser, Valence. You are astonished to find that the prophecy on which you built such faith has proved fallible. You will cease to be surprised when I tell you that it was invented and foretold by mortal lips.'

'Isola a mortal! Impossible!'

'It is not impossible! *for here is Isola,*' says Bulwer, as he leads forward the trembling Agatha, who throws herself at the Earl's feet. 'I was concealed in your library last night, Valence, when the so-called apparition appeared to you. I followed and came up with it, and found beneath a golden wig and cloudy draperies, and most artfully-disguised features, your sister-in-law, Mrs. Arthur West.'

'And you have done this, Agatha!' says the Earl reproachfully. 'You, who have shared my studies and my house for so many years past, have made me a fool and a laughing-stock to my own household! And to what end?'

'The end is not difficult to define,' says Everil scornfully. 'No, Agatha, don't touch me, for Heaven's sake! You and I can never cross hands in friendship again. Whilst I have been trying to save my husband's life you have been doing your utmost to destroy it. Leave me alone! Do not appeal to me! I look upon you as my worst enemy!'

'It was all for Arthur's sake!' wails the Cat, betraying herself at last.

'For Arthur's sake! And that you might give your child a title, you would have robbed me of my life! Go, Agatha! there is no more despicable creature in this world to me than you. We can never live under the same roof again.'

'And am I and my poor child to leave Castle Valence?'

'Do you think I would let you remain there?' commences Everil indignantly, but the Earl places his hand upon her mouth and finishes the sentence himself.

'Certainly, and for ever. You have your own portion. It must suffice you for the future.'

'I never thought to receive such treatment at your hands,' she says, weeping, as she prepares to leave him.

'Perhaps not! Nor I from yours.'

'Mr. Bulwer! I shall never forgive you!'

'That will not affect my appetite, Mrs. West.'

'And as for Everil—I only wish—I wish—I wish——' but the widow's wishes are lost in the closing of the door.

'Follow her, Bulwer,' says the Earl. 'Tell her I give her one week to clear out of Castle Valence. By that time I shall require my home again.'

'Where shall you remain meanwhile—*here*?'

'I do not know. I do not care, so long as it is with *her*,' says Valence, as he looks fondly down upon the golden head that is pillowed on his breast. Bulwer glances towards Alice. She takes the hint, and slipping her hand in his, they leave the room to speak to Mrs. West together.

Then Valence's lips bend down to meet Everil's, and the wife knows her pardon is completed.

'I feel as though I had just awakened from a dream,' he murmurs presently. 'To find myself *here—to-day—at this hour!*—and with you, my beloved one, in my arms! To know that *you* are true, that "*Isola*" is false! Am I awake, dear Everil, or am I dreaming?'

'You have awakened, Valence,

thank God! from the saddest dream your life has ever known. And now that you are convinced that our senses *may* mislead us where we permit them to be taken captive, and see the mischief which may accrue from unauthorised curiosity, may I hope, love—as I pray—that you have done with spirits for evermore?

‘With study of the science, and personal communication with them, Everil—yes! I swear it by my love for yourself and all the devotion you have shown to me. But whilst you and I exist, dear wife—which is for ever—we can never “have done” with spiritual companionship. It is beneath us, over us, and round about us;

appointed by the wisdom of the Almighty to be our protection and our guide; and we should fare but badly were these ministering spirits to forsake us. That—by His Fatherly goodness—can never happen: but for the future you and I will be content to feel and know His care without striving to penetrate the mysteries He has hidden from us. He has given me an angel in yourself, Everil—an angel to lead me on to all good and happiness; and whilst I am clothed upon with mortal flesh, your spirit is the only one with whom I shall hold intercourse.’

And the vow he registers upon her upturned lips, he will keep to her life’s end and his.

FINIS.



HOW THE WORLD WAGS.

LIFE AT HIGH PRESSURE—THE OPERA—SHAKESPEARE'S PORTIA—THE ROYAL ACADEMY.

WITH what astonishing rapidity it does wag—this world of ours—is especially perceptible to the scribe whose duties oblige him to make a running comment on things in general every other month. It is but the other day that the country, spread out before me from the window at which I write, was as white as the pages on which the observations about it were written; here we are in the height of the season; and when next I have striven to show 'how the world wags,' readers who do me the honour of glancing through the last leaves of the magazine in which the sketch will appear will be studying their 'London Society' in shady nooks, under the cliffs by the sea, on shingly beaches, on the lawns of country houses, or perhaps lounging at ease on the deck of some comfortable yacht, as the blue waves swirl along her sides, and now and again a sea strikes her quarter and sprinkles the page with a shower of spray.

The social reformer who discourses on 'Life at High Pressure' has chosen his terms well. Are there sixty minutes in an hour, and twenty-four hours in a day, as we have been taught to believe? In fact, the pace of the age is much too rapid—it must be evident to every man that his friends are living a great deal too hard. It was only yesterday morning at half-past five o'clock that I meditated the heads of an article for a daily paper on this subject, as I was driven swiftly up St. James's Street, bright in the morning sun, deserted save by a workman going to his day's labour, a milkmaid with empty pails, and a couple of

policemen. It is a good thing, to experience 'the breezy call of incense-breathing morn,' and I hope my arguments in favour of regular habits and hours have not been without their effect. I myself was, I must admit, going home to bed from which I trust many wise persons had risen; but this fact does not destroy the cogency of my arguments. For what can one do in these days, when operas begin at half-past eight? It is always twelve o'clock before Margarita di Valois, returning from the historical ball at the Louvre, finds out how dire a tragedy the Catholic soldiers of St. Bris have wrought; and even poor little Amina has not got through her troubles, and entered upon the *ciel d'amor* which she describes in such fluent cadences, much before midnight. Thus by the time your servant or the commissionnaire, as the case may be, has summoned your 'cab or carriage, sir,' a great part of another hour has very likely sped. Social duties must not be wholly neglected: there is probably one house at which you are really forced to look in for just ten minutes; and then, after the turmoil of the evening, and a crush up a crowded staircase, a quiet cigar is almost indispensable. Club-land is near; the comfortable lounges and the iced drink bring tranquillity to a perturbed spirit; and before the discussion on the folly shown by Society in subverting the almanack, and turning night into day, is ended,

'Ecco ridente il cielo
Spunta la bella aurora!'

This, mind you, is not 'fast life,' as we understand the term, but the

ordinary existence of many of the least dissipated men in London. 'We have heard the chimes at midnight, Master Shallow,' said Sir John to his friend the Justice, as they talked over the days that they had seen. In our day, at midnight the evening is considered young. Clearly our friends and neighbours are much to blame for countenancing and encouraging life at high pressure; and some one ought to set a good example.

To speak the truth plainly for once, the performances at the Opera Houses this year have, for the most part, been very unsatisfactory. Neither the Royal Italian nor Her Majesty's is up to the mark; the latter a very great deal below it. At the majority of Continental theatres, for a fifth part of the sum charged for a stall here you can listen to much better music; indeed, there are few audiences besides those of our metropolis which would tolerate much that we submit to without protest, or even faintly applaud. There are, of course, exceptions. We have some very admirable artists, and the bands are good, the latter being one of the very few redeeming points at Drury Lane; but the public have a right to expect a satisfactory *tout ensemble*, and they do not find it. Mlle. de Belocca, for example, was going to do wonders, and she came with a flourish of trumpets. About the theatre were distributed odorous little books, in a language in some respects resembling the English, filled with enthusiastic praises of her vocal and histrionic perfections, a description of 'her eyes shaded by long lashes, and her complexion of dead white,' together with the information that as a child she had been 'fond of cultivating painting,' and much more

which was not wholly relevant. Her career had been triumphant. Kings and poets had praised her—in fact, 'the trilogy of Italian art was complete in Malibran, Patti, and Belocca.'

We listen with anxiety as the Count and Figaro stand beneath Rosina's window. 'S'apre il balcone,' cries the barber, and she appears. As she delivers the recitation, we find that the voice is pleasant, though the intonation hardly comes up to what we should have expected from one of the trilogy of Italian art. But soon we shall be inside the Casa di Dottore Bartolo, and then we shall see. Here comes Rosina. 'Una voce' is given with tolerable smoothness; and then follows the *allegro*, 'Io sono docile,' which will show us of what our new prima donna is capable; and what does it show? A young vocalist endeavouring to do more than her powers and training permit. The high notes are thin—for Mlle. Belocca, a contralto by nature, has been made a mezzo soprano by art, and the operation has necessarily somewhat spoilt her lower tones. The quality of her voice is unequal, her intonation occasionally false; for she has a habit of jumping at her high notes, and, when she has missed them, of almost wandering into another key. This is speaking critically, I admit; but surely we are not expected to make allowances for a young lady who, with Malibran and Patti, completes the trilogy of Italian art? Nor is her acting efficient. Who does not know the little start of delighted surprise, the look which lights up Madame Patti's eyes as the Count declares, 'Almaviva son io; non son Lindoro'? but the latest Rosina takes it with perfect placidity, and begins the succeeding trio with a set smile, which is very pretty, and means nothing. In short,

Mlle. Belocca is a clever amateur, who may or may not grow into an artist; and the only rôle which was satisfactorily filled in the performance of 'Il Barbiere' at Drury Lane was the Bertha of Madame Demerich-Lablache, whose singing of the melodious aria 'Il vecchietto' was the one adequate piece of work from beginning to end. Mlle. Varesi, another *débutante*, is almost perfect as a vocalist; indeed, such fluency as she exhibited in the difficult 'Oh, gioja che si sente,' in the mad scene in 'Lucia,' it would be impossible to surpass, and the truth of the singer's intonation is here made evident by the accompanying flute; but her voice is very small, and the vulgarly-phrased prophecy that she was going to 'out out Patti' is not likely to be fulfilled. Any one who saw Madame Patti's *rentrée* as Dinorah this year, and her subsequent performance in the 'Barbiere,' must be more than ever convinced that she stands alone.

At Covent Garden, indeed, things are rather better, and in Mlle. Zaré Thalberg we have a very promising aspirant, though at present her training has been insufficient to show what she can do. Zerlina, in 'Don Giovanni,' is, in fact, an easy part for a young singer with a naturally smooth voice, inasmuch as there is no necessity for the introduction of *floritura*, which can only be acquired by hard study and practice. In her, I think, there is genius; her *début* was remarkably successful, and the applause seemed genuine, which is not always the case. It was impossible indeed for the most hardened and cynical of hearers to resist the influence of her fresh young voice and pretty childish manner; and I saw more than one of the critics who complain loudest of the decadence of the opera houses (though in their newspapers

they roar you as gently as a sucking dove) applauding lustily, and it is very rarely that applause comes from them. Not the least pleasant part of the entertainment to me was to note the gentleness and care with which M. Maurel and Signor Tagliafico aided and encouraged their little companion. It was the French baritone's first appearance in Don Giovanni, and that is generally quite enough for one man to think about, especially if he is a true and earnest artist, as M. Maurel has shown himself to be; but I am sure he was more anxious for Zerlina than he was on his own account, and so was Signor Tagliafico.

Many silly and a few sensible members of the musical world will be set by the ears in consequence of the production of Wagner's 'Lohengrin' at the Royal Italian Opera. The curtain finally descended at about ten minutes to one o'clock in the morning on which I write, and before these lines appear much will have been said on both sides.

With the old disputes of some twenty years ago we have nothing to do. We are all quite willing to give Wagner and his principles a fair field; but it is to be lamented that while he himself retains much of his virulence, his disciples should be unable to praise him without at the same time abusing somebody else. It is easy to sneer at 'good old papa Haydn,' but hard to find weak places in the 'Creation,' or any want of knowledge of orchestration in 'The Seasons'; and, after all, though Mozart preferred writing music to writing books, and is open to the charge of not having published a history of music in nine volumes, his compositions are not without merit. The climax of absurdity in this direction was lately reached by a certain Miss Tytler, who has

written a book about the composers. There is a joke about an American humorist, who was going to lecture on something because, being utterly ignorant of the subject, he had no prejudices. About Miss Tytler's ignorance there is no disputing; but she has prejudices—one against Rossini, so bitter that, as 'The Pall Mall Gazette' observed, 'but for what he has written his reputation would be quite gone after what Miss Tytler has said about him.' Amongst other astonishing statements is one to the effect that the popularity of 'Norma' is greatly owing to the aria 'Ah, non giunge,' which, to quote the review already mentioned, makes one doubt whether Miss Tytler knows anything of the opera in which 'Ah, non giunge' does occur, or of that in which she believes it occurs; indeed, the writer is led to doubt whether she has ever seen any opera at all, even that to which she refers as 'Il Traviata,' or that to which she doubtless would refer as 'La Trovatore.'

This apparent digression is introduced to show what effect a course of German music can have upon a weak mind. With regard to 'Lohengrin,' which was magnificently put upon the stage, and, what is infinitely more important, almost perfectly represented by the principal characters—Miles. Albani and D'Angeri, Signor Nicolini and M. Maurel—it seems to be one of the most unequal works ever presented, although we are expected to consider it as one harmonious whole. It contains music that is exquisitely beautiful, as, for instance, Lohengrin's farewell to his swan, 'Mercè, mercè, bel cigno gentil,' and the few bars of chorus which follow. The finale to the first act, and the bridal chorus, 'Lieti e fedeli,' are also harmonious, and the former is

powerful, but the greater portion of the opera is noisy and incoherent.

The chief events in the theatrical world have been the successes of Signor Salvini and the production of 'The Merchant of Venice' at the Prince of Wales's Theatre. There can be no doubt that the Italian tragedian is one of the greatest actors that ever lived; and it is equally certain that Miss Ellen Terry's performance of Portia is amongst the most admirable presentations of Shakespeare's heroine that was ever given. About the comedy generally it is unnecessary to speak, as nothing is to be gained by relating over again the story of a failure. The piece is magnificently mounted, with taste and fidelity. I should think that Mr. Ruskin would be gratified in gazing on the 'stones of Venice,' so beautifully arranged on the little stage. But not to comment on Miss Ellen Terry's genius would be to make a serious omission from this transcript of past events. In parts the performance is a veritable inspiration, perhaps the most exquisite of all is her by-play and facial expression while Bassanio makes choice amongst the caskets. On a couch, in a richly-draped saloon of her splendid palace, sits Portia, gazing with her soul in her face at Bassanio, who stands absorbed in perplexity before the table on which the caskets are placed. Love, hope, and fear give place to each other in Portia's eyes, as with half-open lips she leans towards her lover, on whose speedy decision hangs all the hope of her young life. Presently the conflict of emotion overcomes her. Tears gather in her eyes, and, gleaming for a moment, drop upon the pillow of her couch; and then at length her head sinks

down as the supreme moment approaches. All the great actresses of the past, or at least very many of them, have played Portia, but that any of them surpassed Miss Ellen Terry in this scene is not conceivable. The technical terms 'by-play' and 'facial expression' seem meaningless, and out of place, for there was no sign of acting in this exquisite scene; the identity of the actress was gone. She absolutely lived in the character, and there before us was Portia in very truth.

The gentleman who 'does not profess to understand anything about art, but knows what pleases him,' has arrived in town, accompanied by his family, and is in his element, for the Royal Academy is opened, and there are over fourteen hundred subjects for his more or less sapient comments. The clever young lady is also here, and is a little annoying as she stands before some great work, which students are humbly admiring, and proclaims that 'it is a good picture; but still there seems to be something wrong about it.' No, my dears, let us think ourselves superior to the world in general, and pity its ignorance, but do not let us proclaim our opinions aloud. That Sexton of all Messina, who omitted to write down the remarks which Dogberry was so anxious to have recorded, would find plenty of work at the Academy.

The exhibition is fairly up to the average. The young men have done well, and some of the old ones no worse than usual. But how badly some of the Royal Academicians can paint! How crude is their colour, how tricky their composition, and how impossible the figures they endeavour to portray! Turn we to one Dobson (226), and let us look at the

picture, which is not named, and which we will therefore christen 'The Vacuous Family.' Look at the silly old man, the smirking woman, the impossible children! Another Academician sends a nameless picture (203), which might appropriately be called 'Study from the Wood'—a long, shapeless, wooden woman, lamenting the faithlessness of a man who for some inexplicable reason seems to have been attached to her; though why such a woman should ever have thought it possible that any one would marry her is a mystery, seeing that Marionettes may be bought cheaply and kept without expense. Nor would it be fair, while discussing the worst pictures in the Academy, to omit our old friend Mr. Cope, R.A., who, since the decease of Mr. Jones, R.A., has done almost as badly as anybody except Mr. Redgrave. Look at Mr. Cope's 'Home Attraction' (336). How many times has he represented portions of a female figure—for I do not think there is a whole woman here—sprawling over a baby, constructed of some material for which Mr. Cope probably holds the recipe? And for poverty of conception and inferiority of workmanship examine Mr. Redgrave's 'Starting for a Holiday' (228); examine the painting of the children's faces—or rather that portion of them which, assuming them to be right side up—permost, is where the face ought properly to be. The style of picture is that which used to be introduced as a frontispiece to the primers and shilling books of our boyhood; and 'Starting for a Holiday' would have ranked amongst the worst of the lot.

Of course our old friends are here. The worn-out music mistress, Don Quixote, Tom Jones and Miss Sophia Western, Lady Teazle, and many of the rest of those

whose faces we greet on the walls year after year. In the first gallery the first important work which catches the eye is 'The Sculpture Gallery' (26), by L. Alma-Tadema. The title explains the subject. Some 'antique Romans' have come to inspect the studio of a sculptor, from whom, I should think, one of the party has ordered the black marble fountain, and who truly has a wonderfully fine collection of statuary and cunning work in metal. It is said that the picture is 'deficient in human interest,' and critical persons complain that it is 'overloaded with detail'; but ah! what detail it is! What marble!—trace the vein upon and beneath the surface: what bronze! and with what wondrous art the flash and texture of the dresses are introduced! how rich, and delicate, and yet how bold and strong is the whole! And for a specimen of consummate art, look at the draughtmanship of the pavement of the 'Roman Hall' (902), in which a lady is lying at full length to feed her 'water-pets,' gold and silver fish, which swim to her side of the fountain where they live. The bare thought of putting an intricate geometrical pattern such as this into abrupt perspective would cause most painters to shudder; but M. Alma-Tadema has genius—both an innate feeling for truth and beauty, and also that other genius, which has been defined as 'an infinite capacity for taking pains.'

It is always pleasant to meet Mr. Hook, whose pictures are redolent of the sea-breeze, in some secluded nook of the north country which he seems to love so well, and paints with such inspired truth. 'Hearts of Oak' (47) shows a stalwart fisherman, seated on the rocks, carving a wooden boat for the little fisherman in embryo who watches in anxious expectation;

and the mother—for there is always kindly feeling and honest sentiment in Mr. Hook's work—looks on with an expression on her face which proves what husband and child are to her. Thank you once more, Mr. Hook, for this pure and healthy exercise of your great power.

It is chiefly for the feeling inspired by them that the works of this painter will be most generally appreciated; but the technical details are wholly admirable. The light reflected on the sunny ripples is most skilfully rendered, and the seaweed and rocks are painted with a truth which few indeed of the artists who ever lived and limned have been able to approach. Another exquisite sea-piece is 'The Samphire Gatherers' (439). We look down on a girl walking along the edge of a cliff overhanging the sea, and as far as the eye can reach is a wide expanse of ocean. Verily the waters seem to move, with such surpassing power are the wavelets modelled and the currents indicated. Does the delusion that Englishmen have no true artistic feeling still hold good on the Continent? Let a jury of the most *exigeants* of foreign painters be summoned, and let us hear what they say to Mr. Hook; and let us see if there is another living painter who with such fidelity can transcribe the restless waves of the sea. Our painter has done worthily this year; for not only have we, besides these two, 'The Land of Cuypp' (308), but also 'Wise Saws' (256), admirable for workmanship and humour. It is a hot summer's afternoon in the rich and pleasant country, and the cows have come to be milked by the side of a wide stream. The operator has not yet arrived, or, more probably, has forgotten something, and run back; for beside her pails and yoke there is a hand-

kerchief. On a broken fence which crosses the stream, however, sits a raven, who does not seem to have much opinion of cows, but clearly thinks a great deal of birds, especially ravens; and he seizes the opportunity, and improves the occasion by giving the cows a little good advice as to the line of conduct which he considers cows ought with most propriety to follow; while they look on with a sort of placid wonder that such a little bird should have such a great deal of conceit and impudence.

In this gallery, too, is Mr. Millais's 'Fringe of the Moor,' a Scottish landscape, where I would fain linger; for there is so much to say of the wonderful atmospheric effects, and of the brushwood and bush in the foreground—so real, that it almost seems possible to break off the twigs.

Altogether, however, I do not think that Mr. Millais shines with particular brilliance this year, except in one portrait, which is a marvellous specimen of how a great painter can subordinate incongruous elements to his will. The portrait of a young lady, Miss Eveleen Tennant (222), is certainly one of the most extraordinary works of the century. On the details of a very charming face I cannot, of course, comment, as it would have been pleasant to do had the name of the original not been given; but, *quid* art, this seems more and more excellent the more closely it is examined. Who but Mr. Millais could have given us a picture of a young girl, dressed in red, wearing a blue necklace, and carrying a basket of green leaves and highly-coloured flowers in a hand covered by gloves of a rich brown? Yet the whole is perfectly harmonious, there is nothing in the least *outré*, and until you have studied it carefully the nature of the experiment is not apparent.

Few visitors will pass (534) 'He loves me—loves me not,' without waiting to study the face of the arch little maiden who sits on the wheelbarrow, while her great clumsy, true-hearted lover watches to see the result which his coquettish lady-love deducts from the leaves she is plucking. There is no doubt about it; he loves her very sincerely, and she is quite aware of the fact. Mrs. Staples, whose charming sketches have very often adorned the pages of this magazine—and who does not look with pleasure at a drawing when the initials 'M. E. E.' are in the corner?—has made such an interesting little picture that it is agreeable to find out afterwards that the young couple have come to understand each other, as is evidently the case; for (271) here we find them again, and, like Orlando, he is carving on the tree 'the fair, the chaste, the inexpressive she,' who, barring an evident tendency to flirt, will make a very excellent little wife.

I must confess that an irritating incident in this year's exhibition is to hear visitors anxiously inquiring 'Where is Miss Thompson's picture?' and crowding round the work of that most fortunate young lady. A reputation was never more cheaply made than was that of Miss Thompson, who went up like a rocket last year in consequence of the Royal commendation which, it is generally understood, fell upon her by a lucky fluke. Miss Thompson is painstaking and clever; but it speaks badly for the amount of artistic perception possessed by the average Briton, when we see visitors passing heedlessly by works of true art to gaze open-mouthed at this theatrical battle-piece (853). Nor did the manner in which the young lady took her success win sympathy for her; in fact, the con-

temptuous letter she wrote to the 'Times' last year, to complain of the 'well-meaning but misguided individual' who had presumed to hint that the leg of a horse in her picture was incorrectly placed, was an instance of the worst taste. Mr. Sala has ventured to express an adverse opinion concerning some details in her picture in the present exhibition, and I trembled for the safety of that delightful essayist. Since his article has appeared, however, I have had the pleasure of seeing him at the Academy; so Miss Thompson did not order him out for instant execution, and perhaps may be prevailed upon to treat him with silent contempt and spare his life.

We English people are always very ready to make heroes and heroines; but we like to see them take their triumphs with modesty; and, as a rule, the greater the triumph really is, the more unassuming is he, or she, who makes it. I remember a success which was deservedly won some seven months ago—on the night when 'Hamlet' was produced at the Lyceum Theatre. How 'the tragedy went' that evening—to use a theatrical phrase—is a matter of theatrical history. Mr. Irving's genius went straight to the hearts of his audience, and such applause as that which greeted him has rarely been heard in a theatre. When the audience had departed, eagerly discussing the theme on which so much has been written and said, a few of us went round to congratulate the hero of the evening. He had gone up to change his dress; but we made our way across the stage to the manager's room ('Alas! poor Yorick!'), to wait until we could shake hands and say 'Well done!' Presently Mr. Irving appeared, pale and worn with fatigue and anxiety. Do you imagine that he sat down

to write to the 'Times' to complain that some 'well-meaning but misguided individual' had doubted his ability to play Hamlet? On the contrary, he very quietly deprecated the warm praises which were addressed to him, professed himself dissatisfied, but hoped in time to overcome many failings which he felt, but we had not perceived: in fact, the artist was proud only for the sake of his art.

Suppose that Jones had painted 'The 28th Regiment at Quatre Bras,' and Jones's work had not become fashionable. The picture would have been set down as a badly composed congregation of men and horses—and pray tell me of what stuff the queerly-shaped horse in the right foreground is compounded?—posing together to form an impressive tableau. Some good technical painting there undoubtedly is; but that this is all, will, I think, be agreed by most persons who use their own judgment.

To see how an artist can stir the heart with a sketch of a few old soldiers, look at Mr. Herkomer's (898) 'The Last Muster.' It is the last time the old pensioners are to attend service at the old chapel of Chelsea Hospital, and there is nothing in the composition except a few old men sitting on wooden benches; but with what character, what tenderness, what true art they are treated! Take the three old men on the second form. The head of the veteran nearest to us has sunk upon his breast. Few Sundays remain for him before his name shall be called from the eternal muster-roll, and he grieves that he may not pass these few in the old home. The old man's face is deeply pathetic, and his wasted form, clothed in the well-worn uniform, very expressive. A kindly hand is laid upon his arm by a

comrade, who would fain console one who perhaps has been by his side in scenes of a very different nature, years ago, before either thought that fate would land him in the old hospital. The third from us is a hale old sergeant, who turns the leaves of his prayer-book, and will, you may be sure, give out the response manfully. Perhaps he, too, feels some lingering regret; but he is, above all things, a soldier trained to obey orders, and if the word comes to march, he is in his place when the bugle sounds. Each figure tells a plain story, and the whole is thrown together with the skill of one who feels what his brush presents.

A very surprising picture is No. 1198 by Mr. Thorburn, the Associate. At first I took it for the portrait of a lady of middle age and domestic appearance adding up her housekeeping books, and the expression of her face seemed to portray such annoyance as might be caused by the fact that the baker had charged eighteenpence too much, or the greengrocer had put down the asparagus which he omitted to send; but, to my intense astonishment, on turning to the catalogue, I find that the middle-aged lady constitutes Mr. Thorburn's idea of 'The Recording Angel'! Certainly we live and learn.

By many persons Mr. Long's (482) 'The Babylonian Marriage' will be set down as the picture of the year, though it certainly has the fault of improbability, for the row of damsels who are waiting to be sold would never have sat with their backs to the auction while the first of their number was on the pedestal behind them. A more interesting ceremonial these young ladies will never assist at, and human nature, especially feminine human nature, could never resist the natural curiosity

to see how things are going, and how much the bride who has been preferred to all her sisters is about to fetch. A nice discrimination has been exercised by Mr. Long in giving the various degrees of beauty to his characters; and there is much humour in the face of the last but one—the absolute last covers her face with her hands, and will, I should think, require a very large dowry before a husband is found to take her—who leans back her head, and opens her tremendous mouth to give a great guffaw at the idea of there being an uglier than she amongst the brides expectant. Mr. Fildes has also made a success with (1221) 'Betty,' a milkmaid, or, rather, a lady who 'behaves as such,' carrying a pail and a three-legged stool. Here, too, is Mr. J. Linnell with a wonderfully luminous picture of 'Woods and Forests' (314). Mr. Princeps's 'Home from Gleaning' (392) is also a very admirable painting of idealised gleaners, for surely four girls so graceful and refined never went a-gleaning together. They are gentlewomen, and if they were dressed in fine array, and placed in a box on the Grand Tier at Covent Garden, you would see how the entrance to the stalls on the opposite side of the house would be thronged between the acts. Mr. G. Leslie's 'Path by the River' (438) has great merit, like all his works; but the girl is not equal to the exquisite little ladies he generally paints for us; and Mr. Frith's work is much scamped this year, and not equal to what we expect from him. See, for instance, the mouth of the girl in (1232) 'New Earrings.'

There is, perhaps, but one painter who could put on canvas so marvellous a transcript of the summer sea on a hot day as—(497) 'Spires and Steeples of the Channel Islands'—Mr. Brett. The

translucent water, sky of the purest blue, and rocks baking in the noonday sun; the effects of the cloud-shadows on the opaque waters deepening the green blue of the ripples to a purple tinge, and the reflection of the sun's ray are rendered with supreme fidelity. With such great skill is the atmospheric condition expressed that one might almost expect to be able to test the heat by holding a thermometer amongst the gleaming rocks.

There are some good animal pictures this year. Much dash is given by Mr. G. B. Goddard to Lord Wolverton's noble bloodhounds (217), which have been let out, and are making the most of their holiday; and Mr. Hardy, in 'The Disputed Toll' (1218), has done well. An elephant and its keeper have arrived at a turn-pike gate, and the rustic pikeman evidently thinks that a large toll ought to be charged for so large an animal, while the owner appears to base his argument for a free passage on the ground that, as in the List of Tolls no sum is set down to be paid for elephants, it must have been intended to let them go through for nothing. The elephant, who clearly comprehends the situation, is immensely amused, as may be seen by the twinkle in his eye. Mr. S. Carter's (1234) 'The First Taste' is also a capital sketch of some foxhound puppies exercising

their youthful teeth on the lash of a hunting crop, and enjoying the fun without any thought or knowledge of how similar instruments are sometimes employed in kennel and covert on their brethren who neglect business, and let their high spirits run away with them. There is life in the pup which rolls about on its back, and the wondering expression common to puppyhood has just been caught in the face and eyes of the little fellow looking on with his ears as much cocked as he can manage to cock them, and head on one side, seeming to have a sort of dim suspicion that it would be possible to find a more desirable sort of plaything.

Space forbids comment on the superb work exhibited by one of the greatest, not only of living painters, but of painters who have ever lived—Mr. Leighton. Art students will gaze on (398) 'Eastern Slinger scaring Birds in Harvest Time' with inexhaustible admiration and delight, for the work is an exquisite specimen of the manner in which genius and knowledge overcome difficulties which seem well-nigh insurmountable.

Of course this hasty summary is not supposed to include nearly all the good—nor all the bad—pictures in this year's Academy; but it may help to direct the visitor's attention to what is to be sought and what avoided.

RAPIER.



